

SHORT
MEDITATIONS

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BY
J. G. B.
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DUBLIN
FRANCIS CAVENAGH, 32 & 33 WICKLOW STREET
LONDON: GEORGE MORRISH, WARWICK LANE
W. H. BROOM, PATERNOSTER ROW
1866

DUBLIN:
PRINTED BY PORTEOUS AND GIBBS,
WICKLOW STREET.

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THE soul is the dwelling-place of the truth of God. The ear and the mind are but the gate and the avenue; the soul is its home or dwelling-place.

The *beauty* and the *joy* of the truth may have unduly occupied the out-posts, filled the avenues, and crowded the gates—but it is only in the soul that its *reality* can be known. And it is by *meditation* that the truth takes its journey from the gate along the avenue to its proper dwelling-place.

MEDITATIONS,

ETC.

THE MORNINGS OF SCRIPTURE.

IN the progress of Scripture, we have several infant-seasons, as I may express myself, or mornings.

Creation was one—but that of course. That was the birth-day of the works of God—the morning of time. And when the foundations, in that season, were laid, “the morning-stars sang together,” as we read in the Book of Job.

The Exodus was another of these mornings. Israel, as a nation, was then born, or in its early infancy. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt,” the Lord says by the Prophet Hosea. The year started afresh then, as though it were new-born. The month of the Exodus was made the beginning of months. Life from the dead, a resurrection morning, was celebrated in the song of Moses and the congregation on the banks of the Red Sea.

The birth of the Lord Jesus was another. That event rose upon the world like the light of morning. A very long and dreary night had preceded it. Israel was a captive, and in the dust. There were no signs.

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The voice of the last of the Prophets had been silent for centuries. No Urim or Thummin, no ephod of the priest, was delivering oracles, or answers from God. No glory filled the Temple. Nothing distinguished the city of peace, the favoured seat of God on the earth, save now and again the angel-stirring of the waters of Bethesda, when little expected and scarcely welcomed. But the birth of the Lord Jesus, like the morning, awakened the creation; and the lights of many other days broke forth together, to tell that the long, dark night had at length given place to a very bright and cheerful morning. Heaven rejoiced, like the sons of God at the creation. Angels, once so well known in Israel, re-appeared. The grace that had acted in infant, patriarchal days, again displayed itself. Promises to Abraham and to David, which anticipated the new birth of the people and of the kingdom, are cited and rehearsed. All this is seen on this great occasion, this fresh morning-hour in the progress of the ways of God. And the child born in Bethlehem is welcomed by the Seer of God as "the day-spring from on high," the sunrise or the morning. (See Luke i., ii.)

The resurrection of the Lord was another of these mornings. It came after the gloomiest night that ever brooded on the face of creation. But it was light, and light indeed. It was the pledge, the harbinger of an eternal day. It was the turning of the shadow of death into the morning. "It began to dawn towards the first day of the week," when this great mystery disclosed itself—as we read in Matthew xxviii.

The Kingdom will be another of these mornings. It will be day after night, Christ's day after the night

of sin and death, Christ's world after man's world. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." This is written of this coming kingdom. (2 Sam. xxiii.)

The new heaven and the new earth will be another. It will be creation at its *second birth*. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth," says the prophet: "for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away." It is called the dwelling-place of righteousness, the scene where "God will be all in all."

Sweet it is to see morning after morning thus rising, as we pass down the ages which Scripture measures.

But we have another sight to see to. Man has been again and again turning God's morning into the shadow of death. Creation, which came forth from God so fair and full of joy, quickly was turned into a wilderness of thorns and thistles. The ground was cursed which, at its morning-hour, had witnessed the joy of the Lord over it, and the blessing of the Lord on it.—Israel, who sang their resurrection-song on the banks of the Red Sea, became a captive in the dungeons of Babylon, and the land of the glory was left wasted and desolate under the foot of uncircumcised oppressors.—The Sun that in the morning of Bethlehem rose on the world as the light of it, and on Israel as the pledge of a renewed day, set in the night of Calvary—for man was a sinner, and rejected Him.—The same blessed Jesus who rose a second time upon the world and upon Israel as life from the dead, bringing light and life for eternity to us with

Him, now has to see the waning, fading, evening shades of Christendom, which are soon to close in the midnight of Apocalyptic judgments.—The kingdom which is to break forth as the light of “a morning without clouds,” is to close in the great apostasy of Gog and Magog, in the judgment of death and hell, and all not written in the book of life, and in the fleeing away of the heavens and the earth from the face of Him who sits on the great white throne.—The morning, however, of the new heaven and the new earth, God will maintain in its first beauty and freshness for ever. There will be no evening shades of man’s corruption and revolt, no night of judgment in the story of it. It shall be maintained as the one eternal day, the sun of which shall never go down.

What sights are these which pass in vision before us! The blessed God begins again and again to lay His foundations, as in the freshness of morning, and man again and again turns His morning into the shadow of death. But God cannot dwell in darkness. He is not the God of the dead, but of the living—and, therefore, though man may not join Him in maintaining the light, but plunge the whole scene in darkness again and again, He Himself will make good His own glory and secure His own joy, and having at the beginning called forth light from darkness in the morning-hour of the first creation, will hold in eternal beauty the morning of the second creation.

SAMSON'S RIDDLE.

GENESIS I—IX.

“OUT of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.” Samson’s riddle—God’s riddle. (Judges xiv. 14.)

This has been abundantly illustrated in the story of this world. May I not say it is the key of the whole of it. It figuratively shows us God and the Enemy at their several work—the Enemy doing his work as the Strong and the Eater, and God, in gracious, victorious power, forcing him to yield both meat and sweetness—constantly and ever bringing good out of evil, and building new systems of wonder and glory and joy out of the ruins Satan has wrought.

I am now, however, looking at this only as it is presented to us in the earliest chapters of Scripture—I mean in Genesis i.—ix.

Man in innocency is set in the garden of Eden—and there, (as in His whole creation,) God is glorified and has His joy, while the creature is blest and happy.

But man loses this goodly estate. He forfeits his innocency under the temptation of the Serpent, and with his innocency he loses everything.

This leads at once into a new scene. To be sure it does. But we have to ask, What do we see of man, and of the blessed God Himself there?

God makes a coat of skins for Adam, and puts it on Adam, and also another for Eve, and puts it on her.

I ask again, Was this a work more or less grateful to Him than His previous six days' work of creation? Let us consider it. At the work of creation the Lord God had *materials* before Him, and in beauty and in fruitfulness he was garnishing the heavens and furnishing the earth. But now He has *Christ* before Him, and He is occupied with that work of grace which had been the secret and counsel of His bosom in His own eternity, and which will be for wonder and joy and praise in another eternity.

And as to Adam, he, at the beginning, called his help-meet "Woman," but now he calls her "Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

I ask again, In which of these names of his help-meet did Adam find his chief joy? I will let *this* give the answer—"He received her at the first as from himself, bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh; but now he receives her as the mother (and to himself the witness) of that mysterious Seed who was to conduct a controversy with the great enemy who had lately ruined him, till He had overthrown and crushed him."

May I not now say, Can we doubt which of these was the spring of the richer joy to Adam? And besides this exultation in the spirit of *Adam*, there is evidence of a like joy or exultation on the lips of *Eve*, when she cries, "I have gotten a man from the Lord," on the birth of her first-born. And afterwards there is a striking expression of intelligent, believing triumph in *Abel*, when he offers the *fat* with the lamb upon his altar. And still further, as we do not see in Eden,

saints are presented to us as calling together on the name of the Lord, as walking with God, as dying to this life and this world, and as taken to heaven. And what is all this to the heart of man? Is this more or less than innocency and the Garden? Is not heaven a brighter scene than Eden could have been, had it continued man's unsoiled inheritance for ever? (Gen. i.—v.)

I leave these contrasts, that they may tell us whether or not the Eater was forced, in that earliest moment of our history, to yield meat, and the Strong one sweetness.

We come, however, to another and a later field of observation, where again we find God Himself and His creature man, as well as the ruthless Eater.

Wickedness ripens itself, heads itself up to its full form, and the Flood, the Judgment of God, overwhelms it. But an Ark, for salvation through the judgment, is in grace prescribed by God, and in faith built by Noah. And when it is ready, all the creatures of the earth, according to God's election, I may say, come up to take their place in it. And then, in the due moment, when all are housed, Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, and all these separated creatures of every sort, God Himself shuts them in, imparting His own strength and safety to His chosen, and making their condition as unassailable as His own throne could be.

Then, while in the Ark, Noah had exercises of heart—exercises, I may say, in the Spirit. There was the opening of the window, and the mission of the Raven and the Dove, the taking in of the Dove, and again sending her out, and again a second time taking her

in with an olive-leaf in her mouth; and then, the uncovering of the Ark; all this having its various mystic meaning of bright and wondrous truth. And as the time comes for leaving the Ark, everything goes forth just as fresh and abundant as when they went in thirteen months before; nothing wanting, however small and insignificant—nothing damaged, however tender and exposed; and all this, a second time, under the eye of Noah. What must all this have been to his spirit! What fresh and varied delight must all this have been to him, though the work of the Eater had made this imprisonment in the day of the judgment of God necessary to him. (Gen. vi.—viii.)

And, after all this great parenthetical season, and the Ark is left of all that it had carried through the judgment of God, and “the earth that now is,” as Peter calls it, is trod by Noah and his ransomed host, we see his altar and his sacrifice, and God’s acceptance of it. Noah takes the new world as in the name of Jesus. He enters it on the authority and by virtue of what Christ was to him. He reads his title to it in the blood of the Lamb of God, and offers his burnt-offerings of praise accordingly. The Ark had been Christ to him in the day of judgment, and the kingdom that follows shall be his only through Christ. What a free-will offering was this! And what was it to the God of his salvation? We may know something of that when we read, “And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake.” Had there ever been such language in the Divine bosom before? God had rested in His work of creation with infinite delight, we know. He

rested, as we read, and was refreshed. But now, the value of Christ for a doomed creation is before Him, put there in all the preciousness of the blood of atonement, by the faith of a sinner who was confessing to Him, in the mysterious language of his altar, that all his title to anything and to everything was to be found in the sacrifice of His own Lamb. Before this, God had said, "It is not good that man should be alone;" but now He says "*in His heart*, I will not curse the ground any more for man's sake." Before this, He had seen that the work of His hand was good, but now He was smelling a sweet savour in the work of Christ.

Was not all this meat and sweetness again? The enemy had indeed approved himself an Eater and a Strong one, as afore he had in the Garden—corrupting man outside Eden, as at the beginning he had corrupted him within it. But had not God again made him yield meat and sweetness? Were not Divine delights in this scene of redemption of a higher character than they had been in the day of creation? Is not the value of Christ more to God than all the beauty and order that are displayed in the works of His hand? And is not His ransomed Noah in the Ark, a richer one than Adam His creature in the Garden? He was receiving the gifts of grace, and rendering the free-hearted obedience of faith; he was learning the sufficiency of Christ for him, and experiencing the exercises of the Spirit in him. He saw himself not merely in a *created* but in a *redeemed* system.

It is a great sight to see to—the Eater has yielded meat, and the Strong sweetness. And we are still in sight of this great mystery to *the end of these chapters*,

after the new world has been gained, and "the earth that now is" has been formally taken and inherited. For there we see Noah seated in royal and priestly state. He is "blessed," as Adam was in his day, and told to "be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." (Gen. i. 28; ix. 1.) The trail of the Serpent is indeed over the whole scene and condition of things. Adam had the earth subdued to him, and the creatures of the forest, and of the field, and of the sea, and of the air, owned his lordship of them, taking names from him as it pleased him to give them, they in the acknowledgment, and he in the exercise, of sovereignty; while it is only in the dread and fear of Noah that the creatures of the earth now stand. It was no longer their homage rendered to man, but their sense of control by reason of the eminency of man. Here was the fruit and the witness of the work of the Eater. But with this, Noah's table was more richly spread now than Adam's had been at first. The herb of the field nourished man then—the flesh of the beasts of the field shall now nourish him; for Adam's was the due food of an *innocent* one, Noah's is the food of a *ransomed* one. Adam enjoyed the life of an untainted creature—Noah the life of a blood-bought sinner.*

Here was the witnessing afresh how meat was forced out of the Eater. It was a world around, wearing the scars and bruises of a deadly fight—it was a table

* The blood was not to be eaten with the flesh; the blood was reserved to make atonement with. (See Lev. xvii.) Noah, therefore, fed on the witness of his redemption, just like Israel in the paschal night of Egypt. His feast was the feast of a blood-bought sinner.

within, which told of full, and sure, and glorious, and blood-sealed redemption.

But further. The Lord God makes a covenant with Noah, and with all the creatures around him, that He will secure the earth from a second Flood. And in token of this, he hangs the Bow in the Cloud, up there as under His own eye, that He may look on it, and thus remember His promise. What thoughts and words are these; and yet these are the words of the Spirit, telling us of the intimate ways of God with us, and our souls, and our circumstances! The Cloud might threaten, and swell itself with water; the Bow should control it. The Cloud might frown; the Bow should smile. The Lord should be refreshed and glorified now in the *counsels of His grace*, as at the first He had been in the *works of His hands*. And the creation was set, not in fallible, but in sure conditions.

There had been no threatening Cloud in the sky of Eden—but then, there was no shining Bow riding in triumph upon it. The Cloud was now the witness that the Eater had done his work—a deadly work—a work of forfeiture and ruin; but the Bow was alike the witness that God had got meat and sweetness out of him. (Gen. ix.)

Wondrous riddle! beginning to show itself here at the very first.*

* It is said in chapter vi. that God repented that He had made man, that it grieved Him at His heart. But this does not affect this wondrous Riddle, or touch the teaching of this little Paper. For that was the Divine experience when the work of the Eater was looked at *in itself*, and *apart from the work of God* as forcing meat and sweetness out of him.

The Fall or ruin of man has been accomplished through the subtilty of the Eater, the Strong man, the old Serpent which is the Devil and Satan; but in the midst of the ruins, God Himself is gathering richer joy and brighter glory than He had known before—and as to His creature man, his communion with God is deeper and more blessed, his destinies more excellent and glorious, being either heavenly, like that of Enoch and the antediluvian saints, or in royal and priestly dignities, like that of Noah, in a *redeemed* and not merely a *created* system, with the sure tokens of God's unfailing guardianship before him.

GOD'S GREAT ORDINANCE.

WE may have observed in John's Gospel, the zealous and determined way in which the Lord Jesus sets aside all glories which men might bring to Him, that He may establish the grace of God, or the love of the Father in Him and by Him, to poor sinners. He shines there in the glory of grace, and will not shine in any other glory. Men may be for having Him as a Teacher of Secrets, a Doer of Wonders, as a King, as a Judge, or as some One suited to be great in the world ; but He sets all aside with marked and indignant earnestness, and will be known and received only as the Minister of Divine Grace, the grace of His Father, to poor sinners.

In like manner we may see how zealously God sets aside all that would stand in company with Christ, to share His place with Him, or dare to displace Him ; and makes room for Him, and for Him only, as His own one great Ordinance.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is the leading and closing witness of this—but there had been striking and beautiful pledges of the same in earlier days.

And here let me say, there is sweet correspondency in these two things. Christ is zealous in hiding Himself, that the grace of the Father may alone appear in Him, during His ministry ; God, at all times, both

before and after that ministry, would show how zealous He was, either by His hand or by His Spirit, by His providential acts or by His inspired communications, that Christ, and Christ only, should be honoured as His Ordinance. I would notice some pledges and witnesses of this.

Nadab and Abihu, with infidel daring, set aside the fire which had come down from heaven, sealing the services of Aaron, who was the type of Christ; and the hand of God peremptorily and awfully judged that, by slaying them on the spot. Penal fire avenged the strange fire which had displaced the fire which had borne witness to Christ. This was full of meaning.

Moses and Aaron exposed themselves to a like judgment—like, I mean, in character, though not in measure. It was not in infidel daring, but under the provoking and irritation of the people, that they dishonoured the Christ of God, at the waters of Meribah. But they did so. They did not sanctify God in His ordinance. They did not know the Rock that followed Israel, and which Rock was Christ; and they are at once judged to come short of the land.

This was quick resentment on the part of God of all that touched the rights and honours of Christ. There was a great moral distance between the infidelity of Nadab and Abihu, and the haste and unadvisedness of Moses and Aaron—but God's hand avenged the controversy of His Christ with all of them.

When we come to New Testament days, we find the same spirit on the holy hill. In ignorance, not knowing what he said, Peter proposed to give equal place to Moses, Elias, and Jesus. But the voice of the excellent

glory would not be silent then. It is ignorance only, if we please; but the blessed God will not suffer the honour of Christ to suffer at the hand of any one or any thing. It may be but ignorance that would touch His Person or His place, and neither scorn nor temper—neither infidel daring as with Nadab, nor irritation of mind as with Moses; but still God's hand or God's voice will be present to avenge it. The voice lets Peter know that the "Beloved Son" alone is to be heard.

In John Baptist, the Spirit, in another way, does the same work, pleading the cause of Christ. John's disciples were a little moved by the multitude seeming to pass by their Master—and they resent this, as Joshua did in the cause of his Master, when Eldad and Medad began their prophesying. But John, in all gentleness but in all decision, answers this. As in the name of all his brethren the Prophets, he retires, that Jesus alone may be seen and heard. He is Elias speaking the language of the excellent glory on the holy hill. The voice there called Moses and the Prophets away from the eye and ear of Peter; John's word here withdraws himself and all his fellow-servants, the Bridegroom's friends, from his disciples and all beside, that the same "beloved Son" alone may be known. John and the excellent glory have the like thoughts of Jesus.

This is all consistent as well as blessed—and precious to see the hand of God and the Spirit of God thus agreeing to glorify Jesus.

The Epistles join in this service; rather, as I may say, the Holy Ghost in them. One need not particu-

larize or prove this. Every Epistle has its own witness to this. That to the Colossians distinguishes itself in such a character. But in the Hebrews we see this purpose prevailing in the mind of the Spirit throughout. It is a setting aside of one thing after another, in order to have the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, God's great Ordinance, alone before us.

And they are set aside with a strong hand—as in earlier days.

Angels are first withdrawn from our sight; and He who has obtained a more excellent name than they, is brought in—and this, upon the authority of Scripture after Scripture. (i., ii.)

Moses is set aside then, as a servant in the house of another, to leave the place for Him that is Lord over His own house. (iii.)

Joshua gave Israel no rest, and therefore is as nothing and nobody; while Jesus, the true Joshua, gives God's own rest. (iv.)

Aaron must yield to the true Melchizedek—for his priesthood, constituted by the law of a carnal commandment, is weak and profitless, and must give place to that priesthood of the Son, which is established in the power of an endless life. (v.—vii.)

The old covenant must vanish, and that which Christ ministers continue new for ever. (viii.)

The sanctuary under the law witnessed no perfection in the worshipper, but ever kept him apart from the Divine presence. It must be broken down in favour of that sanctuary which by a rent veil witnesses the perfection of the worshipper. (ix.)

The victim under the law never accomplished atone-

ment; but the one sacrifice of Christ has purged the conscience for ever. (x.)

Thus, God's great Ordinance is set in His place, and set there all alone—angels, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, the old covenant, the first tabernacle, the legal sacrifice, all made to yield, and leave the entire scene, and all that belongs to it or fills it, with Him alone. And He brought in, after this manner, by the Spirit of God, is to continue before our souls for ever. “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—be not carried about”

And what the Spirit in His vessels is thus doing—what the Spirit in His authoritative teachers is thus doing—the faith of the elect, inwrought by the same Spirit, is doing likewise. Paul will say, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” And is not this boast in Jesus, this glorying in the Cross, the common instinctive property of every renewed mind—the inwrought, and thus the natural sense and judgment of every saved soul?

And what harmonies are these! harmonies, too, of heaven and of earth, of all times and dispensations, of the excellent glory and of poor earthen vessels! The hand of God, the voice of the Father, the Holy Ghost in His authorized, authoritative ministers, the Spirit in every quickened, illuminated sinner, all joining in avenging the wrongs of Christ, and in honouring God's great Ordinance.

THE SAVIOUR AND THE SINNER.

NOTHING but *the blood* of Christ for a sinner, the whole Word of God proclaims, from first to last. All the expiation he can enjoy, all the reconciliation he can plead, all the answer he can have to the demands of the throne where judgment sits to maintain the rights of God, depends upon it.

It is the blood of the Lamb of God that is presented of God to the faith of a sinner, and it is that which the faith of a sinner apprehends and trusts.

As soon as sin entered, the sacrifice which had been prepared in eternal counsel, was revealed. The very first promise published *the death* of Christ, the bruising of the heel of the Seed of the Woman. This was the thing communicated to man as a sinner—the only thing—the sinner trusted himself to it—Adam came forth from his covert, and trusted the reconciling virtue of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

As soon as the due time came for the public display of redemption, again it was *the blood* of Christ that was revealed, and that only. Israel in the land of death and judgment had to be delivered. They had found grace in the eyes of the God of their fathers, and they must become a people sheltered in the place of judgment, and redeemed out of the place of death. It is that precious blood, and that only, which is used on

that great occasion. It was to be put outside on the lintel of the Hebrew houses in the land of Egypt, and the Hebrew family within had to feed on that victim whose blood was thus redeeming them. Nothing more. In a suited manner they were to feed on the roasted Lamb—not raw nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire, every part of it. This was to be their food. In an Old Testament style, Christ was as if saying to them, “Take, eat: this is my body.”

And according to this, is what we get in the New Testament. I read this in Matt. xxvi., or in Mark xiv., or in Luke xxii. The Lord is there as in the night of the Passover, or in Exodus xii. A *living* Christ He then was, but He presents Himself as a *crucified* Christ, a slain Lamb, a sacrifice on the altar. He overlooks Himself as a living One, and apprehends Himself as a Victim. He takes bread in His hand, and says, “Take, eat: this is my body.” He takes the cup in His hand, and says, “This cup is the New Testament in my blood.” It is the crucified Christ which the living Christ thus presents to the thought and acceptance of sinners, as the foundation and title of all our blessing.

This was giving to the elect family the paschal Lamb whose blood was on the door-posts as their shelter and deliverance. They were to take and eat it—as in the night of Egypt.

In the Gospel by John we do not get the scene at the Supper. We have no “Take, eat: this is my body;” but we have a word between the Lord and the Jews, in which the great secret of the Supper is published by Him to them. In the sixth chapter He tells the multitude, that He was the bread that came down from

heaven, the true Manna, of which if a man eat, he lives for ever. But pursuing His way through that conversation, He declares, that this bread from heaven was His flesh, which He would give for the life of the world, that His flesh was meat indeed and His blood was drink indeed. That is—that it is by receiving Him as *the Lamb of God*, by going to Him as *in death* and on *the altar*, the sinner gets redemption and life. Not by knowing Him as a *living* but as a *crucified* Christ we get the salvation of God.

All this is so, in great certainty and simplicity. From the beginning, the blood of Christ, the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, has been presented to sinners as the *one* object on which they must fix the eye of faith, and to which they must give their full, entire confidence. The living Lamb does not find place in this great mystery of redemption—further than as the life witnessed the fitness of the Lamb for the altar—it is the slain Lamb, the crucified Jesus, that is everything in the great account of the redemption of sinners. The blood of the God-man, and that alone and only, was the ransom.

Not only Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Evangelic Scripture teaches us this, as we have now seen,—as the third of Genesis, the twelfth of Exodus, the institution of the Supper, and the sixth of John,—but in the Epistles we learn the same. The tenth of Hebrews is strikingly to this purpose. There the Christ of God is heard to say, “Lo, I come.” But for what end was He to come? Was it to live? No, but to die. Why was a body prepared Him? Was it to act in it, and to pass thirty-three years in it in the active service of a Witness and

Minister of God and the Father? No; but to offer it on the Cross. (Heb. x., 5-10.) He did live surely, and that under the Law, the true Israelite. He did live surely, and that in such holy, gracious ministry as witnessed God and the Father. But that Scripture (Heb. x., 5-10) overlooks the life, and at once bears the One who came into the world onwards to the Cross—just as His own language at the Supper-table, as we saw, overlooked Him as the living One, to present Him as the crucified One. And then, in that same Scripture, we learn, that it is by the offering up of the body, by the blood of the Son in the body that was prepared for Him, that sinners are sanctified and perfected. This we read again in the thirteenth chapter of the same Epistle, “Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate”—the sanctification of a sinner depending altogether on the blood of Christ.*

I say no more than this, though all Scripture and the Epistles distinctly would furnish so much. The shadowy ordinances of the Law, and the direct dogmatic teaching of the Apostles, all join in telling us, that the death or blood of the Christ of God is everything for a sinner.

But if God thus communicate His mind, faith so apprehends and receives it. The fifty-third of Isaiah is a witness of this. There, the faith of the awakened Israel of God may, in passing, glance at the person, life, and

* I fully admit sanctification in another sense, as I may say, the sanctification of a saint—the gradual purifying of an elect one under the truth by the Spirit. (John xvii. 17.) But I speak here of the sanctification of a sinner.

ministry of the Christ, but it is but in passing—they go onward to the Cross, and there they find everything for the perfecting of their conscience as sinners, and the spring and foundation of all the glories of Christ Himself. At the Cross they discover that the chastisement of our peace was there, the wounding for our transgressions was there, and our healing by His stripes; and that having made His soul this offering for sin, He could see before Him His family, and the full accomplishment of the good pleasure of God in the vindication and display of His own glories for ever. “He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

So, the joy of the life of faith in Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles, finds its spring in the same death of the Lord for him. (See Gal. ii., 20, 21.) So, he presents that object to the faith of sinners, as the *only* object of the faith that justifies. (Rom. iv., 23-25.) And so again, he teaches us that Christ crucified is singly offered to the sight of a sinner that he may be blest as with faithful Abraham. (Gal. iii., 1-14.) “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” says another Apostle. (1 Pet. ii. 24.) “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin,” says another. (1 John i. 7.) But this may be enough; though all Scripture, again we say, Patriarchal, Mosaic, Prophetic, Evangelic, and Apostolic, all join in putting “the Lamb of God” and “the sinner” together for redemption and justification—the Lamb provided in the riches of the grace of God, and accepted by the faith of the sinner, through the inworking, drawing, and illuminating teaching, of God the Holy Ghost.

And then, that which is thus given in grace, accepted by faith, and witnessed in all Scripture, is to be celebrated for ever in realms of glory. This we get in what I may call the only remaining portion or division of Scripture, the Apocalypse. While still on earth, the saints there let us know, that they have found their object for praise, and their spring of joy, in the Lamb that was slain. We hear them break forth, while John was addressing them still here, in that fervent strain, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever." (Rev. i., 5, 6.) And after they have been translated, after they have left the earth for heaven, and have reached the home of glory, we hear them again in like joy. "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth." (Rev. v., 9, 10.) And the realms of glory as well as the home of glory, the nations on the millennial footstool, as well as the glorified in the heavens, echo the strain—for it is the one fond, commanding thought that shall occupy eternity and fill creation—for we hear again this kindred voice—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) They may not be able to add a word about their reigning, as the glorified did, they may have only to know that they shall be before the throne,

and serve God day and night in His Temple, that all their tears shall be wiped away, and that they shall be led by the Lord to fountains of living waters; (verses 15-17;) but "the blood of the Lamb" is the common object of praise, the common spring of joy, the one only title to all blessedness, whether of the glorified, translated saints, or of the redeemed nations that occupy the earth in millennial days of restitution and refreshing. Sinners now travelling and struggling in unredeemed bodies, and in pilgrim, militant conditions, and sinners by-and-by in either the home of glory in heaven or in the realms of glory on earth, know nothing but the Saviour in the blood that He shed for them, in the life that He gave up for them, as the Lamb of God, on the Cross at Calvary. All glory in that, but in that only.

Q U O T A T I O N S . .

PASSAGES of the Old Testament cited, as they are, in all parts of the New, with many and many a glance, or tacit, unexpressed reference, link all the parts of the Volume together, and give it a character of unity and completeness. The contents themselves of the Volume do the same. They also give unity and completeness to it—for they are a series of events which stretch from the beginning to the end, from the creation to the kingdom. And prophecies in the Old Testament of events in the New, are as quotations in the New of passages in the Old. And thus, in the mouth of several witnesses of the highest dignity, we have the oneness and the consistency of the Divine Volume from first to last fully set forth and established.

This would tell us, that it is all the breathing of one and the same Spirit. Scripture itself announces the same. And again, the contents themselves speak also in this case. "Their self-evidencing light and power," the moral glories in which they so brightly, so abundantly, and so variously shine, witness that God is their source. And thus the Divine original of the Book, as well as its unity and consistency, is established. And we hold to these truths in the face of all the insult which is put upon them by unreasonable and wicked men—oppositions of criticism, falsely so called, only

spend themselves in vain, like angry waves upon the sea-shore. God Himself has set the bounds; and these things only return upon themselves, foaming out their own shame.

In the progress of the New Testament Scriptures, the Lord and the Holy Ghost, in their several way and season, use the Scriptures of the Old. This is a sealing of them, if they needed that. But it is so. It is God putting His seal on them *after they come forth*, as it was He who breathed them *before they came forth*.

As to the Lord, we shall find that He uses Old Testament Scriptures in several different ways.

1. He observes them obediently, ordering His life, forming His character, 'as I may speak, according to them.

2. He uses them as His weapons of war, or shield of defence, when assailed by the Tempter or by the world.

3. He treats them as authority, when teaching or reasoning.

4. He avows and avers their Divine original, and their indestructible character, and that too in every jot and tittle of them.

5. He fulfils them, not withdrawing Himself from His place of service and of suffering, till He could survey the whole of them (as far as that service and suffering had respect to them) as realized, verified, and accomplished.

In such ways as these, and it may be in others, the Lord honours the Scriptures. What a sight! What a precious fact! How blessed to see Him in such relationships to the Word of God, that Word which is the ground and witness of all the confidence and liberty and

peace we know before God ! We read the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, there tracing a worshipper's relation to Scripture, and we find it edifying to mark the breathings of a saint under the teachings, and drawings, and inspirings of the Holy Ghost. But it is still a more affecting thing to mark and trace the relations into which the Lord Jesus puts Himself to the same Scripture.

Then, when the ministry of the Lord is over, when the Son has returned to heaven, and the Spirit comes down, He appears, (as in the Apostles whom He fills to write the Epistles,) doing the like service for us. For in all the Epistles we get quotations from the writings of the Old Testament.

And there is no limit to this. These quotations are found in every part of the New Testament, and are taken from every part of the Old, from Genesis to Malachi—and that very largely. So that we have, in the structure of the Divine Volume, nothing less than the closest, fullest, and most intricate interweaving of all parts of it together, the end, too, returning to the beginning, and the beginning anticipating the end. In a certain sense, we are in all parts of the Volume when we are in any part of it, though the variety of communications, in disclosing the dispensations of God, is infinite.

And surely we say, these qualities of the Holy Book are in the highest sense Divine ; as its contents or material have in them a comprehension and display of moral glories in all unsullied excellency, which in the

clearest manner, speak of God, unmistakeably, to heart and conscience.

But further.—Scripture links itself with eternity.

If we have foretellings in the Old Testament of events in the New, so have we, in both Old and New, foretellings of the eternity that is to come.

If we have quotations in the New Testament of passages in the Old, so have we in both the Old and New, references to the eternity that is past. Scripture passes beyond its borders, as I may say, and is in the scenes and glories of the coming eternity—Scripture also retires behind its borders, and is in the secrets and counsels of the eternity that is past, unsealing “the volume of the book,” and disclosing predestinations which were formed and settled in Christ ere worlds were.

Surely it is marvellous! But the Spirit of Him who knows the end from the beginning, accounts to us for it—but nothing less can. And the Book, as has been said, is a greater miracle than any which it records.

And blessed for us to know and to prove, that it prepares us for everything, for all that which surrounds us at this moment. Confusion and corruption may be infinite, but we have it all anticipated in and by the Book, to which we listen as the witness of everything to us in the name and truth of God. We need not be afraid with any amazement, since we have it. We may (if that be a holy action of the soul) “deride,” and not “dread,” the insolent infidelity of the day; and if we have grace, pray for those wicked men, that God would give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

And I would add this—that these citations out of

His own writings by God Himself, first in the Person of the Son, and then in the Person of the Holy Ghost, are beautiful in this character to which I before alluded—that as He sent forth these writings as from Himself, at the beginning, being the Source of them, so after they have come forth, and been embodied in human forms, and accepted of men, as in all languages of the nations, and seated in the midst of the human family, He Himself comes to accredit them there. He has *inspired* them and *sealed* them—and we receive them thus introduced to us by Himself—and we ask no more.

And we may say of the Scriptures from beginning to end, one part of them cannot be touched without all being affected. To use inspired language, “whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it,” God has so tempered all of it together. And I may go further in the same analogy, and say, the uncomely parts have been given more abundant honour—as for instance, in the Book of Proverbs we get as rich and blessed a witness of the Christ of God in His mysterious glories, as we find anywhere.

Yea, and I will take on me to add, if all other parts, like the members of the one body, resent trespass and wrong done to any part, so the Spirit will say of God and Scripture, as He does of God and His saints, “He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.” I am sure of it. God will make the quarrel of Scripture His own quarrel. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words,” says the Lord Jesus, “hath one that judgeth him.”

COMMUNION.

WE may contrast the communion to which John in the first chapter of his first Epistle, introduces the soul, with that which Paul gives it at the close of Rom. viii., and also with that which the same Apostle gives it at the close of Rom. xi.

In Romans i.—viii., the Apostle is instructing us in the secret of peace, which the blood of Christ has provided for the conscience; and at the end of that scripture, he prepares a triumph for the conscience, or rich, exulting communion with God over *the work of Christ for His people*.

In Rom. ix.—xi., he is instructing us in the counsels and dispensational wisdom of God; and at the end of that scripture, he prepares a triumph for the delighted and enlarged understanding of the saint, or communion with God over *the riches of His wisdom and knowledge*.

But in 1 John i., it is neither of these. It is not communion because of the all-sufficient work of Christ for sinners, or because of the all-glorious and wonderful ways of God. It is communion with Himself, personal communion because of a well-known relationship between Him and ourselves. This is of another kind—and somewhat of a higher kind.

And we may mark this further.

This last communion which John introduces us to, does not, like the two former, conduct the soul into triumph and exultation, but into calm satisfaction of heart, called "the fulness of joy." It is rather the exercise of the heart in the sense of personal relationship, not the exercise of the conscience in its assertion of freedom and victory because of the blood Christ, nor the exercise of the mind, the renewed understanding, in admiring, worshipping delight, because of the treasures of God's revealed wisdom.

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

LET me say, with what force does the Spirit of God in Scripture teach us the mystery of *life*. With what an intense sense of it would He impress our souls, that we have lost it, but that Christ has it for us.

The flaming sword in the hand of the Cherubim keeping every way the way of the Tree of Life, was the expression of this, as soon as ever sin was committed and death brought in. That sight let Adam learn, and all of us through Adam, that the life which we have lost we never can regain.

The ordinance which forbade the eating of blood, set up as soon as ever the flesh of animals was given for food, and continued and repeated jealously in the law, was a witness of the same, a standing witness which spoke to the heart and conscience of man from the days of Noah to the times of the Gospel—and perhaps indeed to this present time. (Acts xv.)

The Gospel teaches the same great truth abundantly. None are left with any power to question it—that man is dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and that he is without strength, and can never recover or revive himself.

In this intense, emphatic way does Scripture, from beginning to end, let man know that he has lost life, and lost it irrecoverably.

With equal intenseness is the other great mystery unfolded—that life is in Christ, the Son of God, and in Him for us.

Peter was given to know this, that life was in Jesus—that He was none less than the Son of the living God. And upon his confession, the Lord goes on at once to reveal the further truth, that that life, thus owned to be in Him, was a victorious life that should be used for the Church. (Matt. xvi.)

I stop not to give the beautiful proofs which the Lord's ministry affords us of this eternal life, this victorious life, this life of the "quickening Spirit" being in Jesus all along His times here, but we see it gloriously displayed after His death. The empty sepulchre as seen in John xx. 5-7, is the peculiar witness that a *Conqueror* had been in the *regions of death*. And He was then, as we know, seen of the chosen witnesses, for forty days after He had risen. But I want to meditate a little over the great fact, that this victorious life in Jesus the Son of God is for us. I turn to the first three chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews.

There, He that was dead is alive again. His death is shown to have been for us. He did not die simply to exhibit His victory, to show that He was the Stronger Man, though in the house of the Strong one—but His death is declared to have been for us. It tells us, as Matthew xvi. 18 had pledged, that His victorious life the Son uses for the Church.

He died as the Purger of our sins. He, by the grace of God, tasted death for us. He, by death, met him who was keeping us through fear of him all our life-

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time in bondage. These are the interpretations of His death which we find in the first two chapters.

At the opening of the third, we are commanded to consider Him who has been faithful—faithful after this manner—faithful to Him who appointed Him thus to undertake to gain life through death for us. We are to consider Him, for the establishing of our faith and for the comfort of our souls, acquainting ourselves with this great mystery, that the Son of the living God has been in conflict with death, and in the place of death, that He might bring back life to us who had lost it, and lost it irrecoverably.

And as we are exhorted to *consider* Him, so are we further exhorted to *hold* Him, *fast*, and *firm*, and *steadfast*, as this same chapter proceeds.

And what is the warning? What must be the warning, after such teaching as this? “Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” How simple, and yet how needful, and yet how blessed! None less than “the living God” Himself has been made ours in Jesus, and therefore it is easy to say, *our all* depends on holding to Him.

CONVICTED YET CONFIDING.

I READ this little sentence as though it might be the common motto of all the saints. It tersely describes us, and is God-glorifying, and sinner-humbling. It is also the experience of faith. Let us engrave it on our spirits, and read it out as our confession. "Convicted yet confiding." The great houses of the earth have their several devices and mottoes, memorials of family distinction. This may be the family-motto of the saints, not distinguishing them one from another, but each and all of them from a world that seeks to maintain its own character, and to keep its own good opinion, not knowing the secret of confidence in Jesus.

That confidence, the confidence of a sinner in a Saviour, is what God proposes to Himself for the glory of His great Name, in this revolted world. Having exposed us under the law, He says to us (as another has said) as in the Gospel, "I find I cannot trust you, you must now trust me."

God claims our confidence, and He has graciously entitled Himself to it. He has accepted the death of Christ for sinners. He is *just* when He forgives, because of the work of Christ, and because of the glory of the Person of Him who did that work. It is not *mercy* that forgives the believing sinner; it is *righteousness*. Grace provided and gave the Son. That is so indeed

—mercy unfathomable, inestimable. But it is righteousness which accepts the Son and what the Son has done and perfected for sinners. We lean our souls and our hopes upon *facts*—not upon gleams of sunshine in our spirits, nor upon promises in the Word, nor upon help from God. Mere help would not do for them that are already under condemnation—promises to us would not answer God's demands upon us. It is upon facts, upon transactions counselled, accomplished, and accepted as between God and His Christ, and as for us, we rest ourselves—an anchor of the soul sure and steadfast.

“Convicted yet confiding.” Yes, it is a fitting motto for the family of believing, ransomed sinners.

We must be convicted, or we should not know ourselves; we must confide, or we should not know God. Confidence may be firmer and more perfect in some quickened souls than in others—and so conviction may be in different measures of intensity. Scripture illustrates these things, and experience proves them every day. Still, the blessed God, in the Gospel of the blood of Jesus, has entitled Himself to fullest confidence, and claims it; and surely we sinners have to submit to conviction; and this the believing sinner may take, and surely will take, as his motto, as that which emblazons his condition, and memorializes his character, “Convicted, yet confiding.”

Adam knew this condition, as soon as he came forth from his hiding-place, and “submitted” his naked body to be clothed with the coat which God's own hand had made for him. And so, we all know the same condition to be ours, when, as sinners, we by faith

“submit ourselves to the righteousness of God.” (Rom. x. 3.)

Patriarchal faith, which took knowledge of death in ourselves, but likewise took knowledge of God as a Quickener of the dead, did the same.

Israel, putting the blood upon the lintel, to shelter themselves, in God’s provision, from the death that was abroad in the land, did the same.

All *the ordinances of the law*, its washings and sacrifices, rehearsed the same continually. They set it forth, that we had destroyed ourselves, but that in God and His provisions we had our salvation.

All *the Prophets taught* the same; but Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel are put through the *experience* of it, and Isaiah, as I may say, through the *history* of it.

And now, it is *the characteristic of the Gospel* to publish this fact, and to invite sinners, by faith, to take this condition, to adopt this very motto, as I have called it, as their own, the expression of their state, and that which tells what they are—“Convicted yet confiding.” It is illustrated in the quickened souls of the New Testament—in Peter, and Paul, and the Samaritan, and the three thousand, and the Jailor, and Nathanael, and all beside. And each of us, to this day, and all till the last sinner be saved, as I may speak, pass through the same history, in spirit, or in the experience of our souls.

Precious is this unity, this common light and intelligence, this oneness in the nature we have all received in Christ. We are all one, as standing in this condition.

But among all the cases which illustrate or set forth

this condition, none at present more strikingly gives it to us than David in 2 Sam. xxiii.

David had involved his conscience beyond, it may be, what any saint of God had ever done. The scarlet, crimson colour of his sin was deep indeed. We need not rehearse the particulars of it. And deeply indeed he had been convicted. Many of the Psalms may tell us this, and much of the history which we get in chapters preceding this. And in "his last words," as he calls his utterance here, we may see the same—that he had been thoroughly convicted. For he owns that his house was not with God as it ought to have been—and this was the fruit of his own sin. He had himself brought a sword into it, that was never to be sheathed till he had given up that house to another. But, though thus convicted, thus taking knowledge of the judgments which had overtaken him, he yet confides—and utters his confidence in these "his last words" in very blessed language indeed. He talks of future and everlasting blessedness, perfect in its character, clear and certain in the title he had to it. It was, as he says, "ordered in all things and sure."

And he can speak of the judgment of "the sons of Belial." This is very striking. In the day of his sin, he had been called by this very name. "Come out, thou bloody man, thou man of Belial," Shimei had said to him. And he would not answer Shimei. He rather owned that God had given him his commission thus to charge him. Sons of Belial might, therefore, say he was as bad as they. But in the face of all this, he is not afraid: nor does he hesitate to pronounce their judgment, confident that in the riches of grace, however

they might convict him, God had separated him from them. As Peter can face and challenge the Jews as *deniers* of the Lord, the Holy One and the Just, though he himself had been, literally and simply, a denier of Him himself. And Paul can condemn his own nation for the very things that had distinguished his own guilt. (1 Thess. ii. 15.)

This was a wonderful utterance of a man "convicted yet confiding." It was a voice heard from the realms of *the restored*. David was not merely a sinner then, looking forth from his self-wrought ruins to the God of salvation. He was a restored backslider, looking from amid the terrible ruins which he had brought upon himself, and out of which he was never to escape while he lived, to Him who was his in bonds that would hold for eternity. And this gives this utterance eminent peculiarity. It is a voice heard from the realms of the restored.

GENESIS III.—V.

THESE are very important chapters. They show us the production of the two great energies which, to this day, animate the whole moral scene around us; and also show us these two energies doing their several businesses then, as they are doing still.

They are remarkable chapters. Wonderful, in exhibiting so much various moral action so distinctly and yet so concisely—leaving I may say nothing unnoticed, and yet in so short a space.

I would notice the *production* of these great energies and their *workings*—the energy of *flesh* and the energy of *faith*, or of the old nature and of the renewed mind.

The lie of the Serpent prevails to produce the first of these.

The Serpent gains the attention of the Woman to words in which there was some suggestion injurious to her Lord and Creator. It was a lie, though subtilly conveyed; the only instrument by which he could reach and tempt her. She listens and answers—and her faculties thus enlisted are soon in action in the cause of her seducer, and she falls.

The principle which is called “the flesh,” or “the old man,” is produced at once—and at once begins to work. Confidence in one another is *immediately* lost. Innocence had needed nothing—but guilt is necessarily

shame, and must get some kind of covering. Every man to this hour carries in him what he cannot comfortably and confidently let out, even to his fellow-creature. Restraint has taken the place of freedom, and artifices come to the relief of guilt and shame. So is it now, and so was it in this hour when *the flesh* was generated.

More deeply still does it retire from God. We can bear each other's presence under the dressing of form and ceremony, and the common understanding of the common guilty nature; but we cannot bear God's presence. Though he had the apron of fig-leaves, when *His* voice is heard, Adam retreats under the trees of the garden. This is the flesh, or the old guilty nature, to this day. God is intolerable. The thought of being alone or immediately with Him, is more than the conscience can possibly stand. All its contrivances are vain. God is too much for the flesh. It secretly whispers and lays all the mischief on God Himself, but it cannot come forth and tell Him so. Out of its own mouth it is judged.

These are its simplest, earliest energies. We are hateful and hating, and we are at enmity against God.

But the working of this same principle (thus produced in Adam through the lie of the Serpent) is manifested in other ways afterwards in Cain. "Cain was of that wicked one." He becomes a tiller of the ground. But he tills, not as *subject to the penalty*, but as one that would get something desirable out of the ground, though the Lord had cursed it, *something for himself, independent of God*.

This is a great difference. Nothing is more godly,

more according to the Divine mind concerning us, than to eat our bread by the sweat of our face, to get food and raiment by hard and honest toil. It is a beautiful accepting of the punishment of our sin, and a bowing to the righteous thoughts of God. But to get out of the materials of the cursed ground what is to minister to our delight and our honour and our wealth, in forgetfulness of sin and of the judgment of God, is but perpetuating our apostasy and rebellion.

Such was Cain's tillage. And accordingly it ended in his building of a city, and furnishing it with all that promised him pleasure, or advanced him in the world. This he seeks after—and seeks after with greediness, though he must find it all in the land of Nod, in the regions of one who had left the presence of God.

He has his religion withal. He brings of the fruit of the earth that he was tilling, to God. That is—he would fain have his enjoyment of the world sanctioned of God. If he could command it, he would keep God on terms with him, though he was making the very ground which He had cursed the occasion of his enjoyments. This is very natural—practised by our hearts to this hour. Cain desired to link the Lord with himself in his worldliness and love of present things, that he may keep conscience quiet. But the Lord refuses—as He does to this day; though, as we said, the heart to this day would fain make the same efforts, and get its worldliness and love of present things sanctioned and shared by Jesus, that conscience may not interfere with the pursuits of lust.

What ways of the flesh or of “the old man” are here! All this is the very thing that is abroad in the

world to this hour. It is the working of that apostate principle which was generated by the lie of the Serpent in the soul of Adam. And being of the wicked one, Cain "slew his brother." He had religion, as we have seen; but he hated and persecuted the truth. Just as to this day. Look at the same thing in Saul of Tarsus, as he gives you the account of it himself in Acts xxvi. Look at it in the person of the Pharisees set against the Lord. Look at it in the history of Christendom all down its generations to the present hour.

This is the enmity of the seed of the Serpent to the seed of the Woman. "Cain was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." This was the cause. It was the enmity of sin to godliness, the enmity of the carnal mind against God, the lusting of the old man, the lusting of flesh against spirit—it was the hatred of the world to Christ, "because he testified of it, that the works thereof were evil." It does not always wear such garments stained with blood, but it is always in the heart, "The carnal mind is enmity against God."

Such is the flesh, the old nature, in the history of its *production*, and in the course and character of its *workings*. It is exactly now what it was then. It rules "the course of this world" under Satan, but it is found also in each of us, and does its work in each of us, if provision be made for it. But we are to *know* it—to know it whence it came and how it works, and to mortify it in its principles and in its acts, in all its proper native energies which so continually beset the soul.

But we now turn to the other activities which we find

produced and at work in these wonderful chapters—the activity or energy of faith produced by the word of God, through the hidden but effectual power of the Spirit.

While Adam was in the condition to which sin had reduced him, while he was still the guilty and culprit man under the trees of the Garden, the word of the Gospel, the tidings of the Conqueror slain, of Him who bore the penalty, and yet reached the point of glorious victory, the Woman's Seed, reached his ear, and he is born again by the incorruptible seed, the word of the truth of the Gospel.

He comes forth just as he was. But he comes forth in the full sense of salvation, and of the victory which the grace of God had counselled and wrought for him. Accordingly he speaks of *life*. There is something very fine in that. He calls his wife "the mother of all living." There is something truly marvellous as well as excellent in that. Dead as he was himself in trespasses and sins, he talks of life—but he talks of it in connection with Christ, and with Him only. He gives himself no living memorial at all. He does not link himself with the thought or mention of life, but only the Seed of the Woman, according to the word which he had just heard. Nay, he rather implies that he knew full well he had lost all title and power of life, and that it was entirely in another—but that it was in that other *for him*. That the life found in another was for his use, he has no manner of doubt; the proof of which is this—that at once he comes forth from the place of shame and guilt into the place of liberty and confidence and the presence of God.

He regains God. He had lost Him, and been estranged from Him. He had lost Him as his Creator, but he had now regained Him as his Saviour, in the Gospel, in the Woman's Seed, in Christ his righteousness.

But we may add, to our great comfort as sinners, this simplicity and boldness of faith is *exactly after the mind of God*. Nothing could have been so grateful to Him as this—and consequently, in pledge of this, He first makes a coat of skins for Adam, and then with His own hands He covers his naked body.

Very blessed this is. This is the faith which at the day of the Well of Sychar, and to this day, gives the Lord a feast—meat to eat which even the loving careful sympathies of His dearest saints know not of.

Christ is now everything to this pardoned sinner. In like manner, through faith, Eve exults in the promise. It is the joy and expectation of her heart; and Abel's religion is entirely formed by it. The penalties of sweat of face and sorrow of heart seem to be forgotten. And what is deeply to be considered—the earth is lightly held, when Jesus was firmly grasped. Adam has regained the Lord Himself, and he seems never to count on being a citizen of the world again, but a mere tiller of the ground according to Divine appointment for a season, and then to leave it to share the full fruit of the grace and redemption he had now trusted, in other worlds. He dies—that is all. He seeks for no memorial here. He builds no city. He aims not to *improve a cursed world*. He toils in it, and eats his bread out of it. But he never forgets that judgment is upon it. The family of Seth call on the

name of the Lord, and look, in God's way and time, for comfort and blessing in the place of present toil and curse. But that is the thing of hope and of prophecy, while strangership in the judged world is the present path of faith and godliness.

This is a wondrous Scripture indeed; and it speaks to us of this very hour through which we are passing.

The energy of the flesh or of the old nature is produced, and set at all its proper work—the energy of faith is also brought forth in the souls of the elect, and displays its power very blessedly. We learn our own lessons here. We carry the two energies in us. By nature we are citizens of the city Enoch, and through grace our souls have got connection with Christ, like Adam or Abel or Seth. And we wait for the translation of Enoch. (Gen. v. 24.)

These are contrary the one to the other. “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”

ABRAHAM IN GENESIS XVIII., XIX.

THE elevation of Abraham in Genesis xviii., xix., is something very peculiar.

He seems to apprehend the Divine Stranger and His angelic companions *at once*, needing no introduction, or notice, or revelation—as Joshua, Gideon, and others, in like circumstances, did. “He was accustomed to the Divine presence,” as one has said. This opens these wondrous chapters.

The Lord does not come to regulate him in any way, either to rebuke or instruct him morally. Abraham is before him in the place and character and attitude of one who was fully prepared for His presence.

Accordingly, the Lord makes His ways and thoughts known to Abraham, as a man would to his friend. He reveals secrets to him which do not concern himself—had they done so, in a sense Abraham would have been entitled to hear them; the Lord would surely tell them to him. But he has no personal concern in the matters communicated. They are the Lord’s thoughts and purposes touching a city and a people with whom Abraham had no intercourse whatever. They were strangers to him and he to them—and that, most advisedly. So that the Lord now deals with Abraham as a *friend*—not even as a *disciple*, much less as a *sinner*, but as a friend.

Abraham apprehends this. He was entitled to do so. Grace expects to be understood, and surely delights in being understood. And so, if the Lord invite us we should go; if He draw nigh to us, we should draw nigh to Him.

And so it is here. The Angels, seizing on the mind of their Lord, retire; and Abraham, doing the like, draws near, and there speaks for this city and people. He has nothing to ask for himself. No, surely. He had no confession to make or requests to prefer for himself, but as the Lord had spoken to him about Sodom, he now speaks to the Lord about it. He intercedes, as one near to God, as one who was at ease touching himself, and thus at leisure to attend to others.

Every feature in this picture is full of grace and dignity. There is nothing of feebleness or dimness here—all is strength and elevation.

But this is continued.

The next morning, as we read in chapter xix., Abraham gets him up to the place where he had been speaking to the Lord about Sodom, somewhere on the hills of Judea, overlooking the plain of Jordan, or the vale of Siddim, where Sodom lay; and there he beholds the burning of that city under penal fire from heaven. He sees the judgment of the Lord. He sees it from on high, where he and the Lord had been talking together the day before.

Now this is of one character with all the rest. This is still elevation of the highest order. This is *heaven's* relationship to judgment, God's own relationship to it. Abraham was not rescued out of it like Lot; nor calmly

taken through it like Noah; nor merely borne away ere it came like Enoch—but beyond them all, he is given heaven's own place in relation to it. He looks down upon it executed on others, having nothing to say to it whatever, not having to be either removed from the scene of it before it come, or carried safely through it after it had come. He was in nothing less than heaven's own relation to it.

This is very great indeed. And this is the Church in the Apocalypse; not as in 1 Thess. iv. simply, but beyond that; as in the Apocalypse. The crowned Elders there are on high, as the judgments take their course on the plain or earth below. Abraham-like, they behold the judgments as from God's place. It is not mere translation to heaven before they come, like Enoch, (for that had taken place before,) nor is it simply carriage through them, when they had come, like Noah; but they behold them executed, like Abraham from on high.

As Abraham's place in chapter xviii. had been the *present* place of the Church, learning the secrets of God, (see John xv. 15,) so his place in chapter xix. is the *Apocalyptic* place of the Church, surveying the judgments of the Lord on the earth. Abraham had the fact communicated to him first; and then, he saw the accomplishment of that fact below, and apart from himself. In these things he is as the Church of God.

But these wondrous chapters suggest a general thought upon Divine judgments. We trace a series of them in Scripture: as in the days of *Noah*; *Lot*; *Israel in Egypt*; *Israel on the shore of the Red Sea*; *Deborah in the Book of Judges*; the *Church on earth*, as in

1 Cor. xi.; the *Church in glory*, as in Rev. v.; the elect *Remnant* in Rev. xv.; the *heavens* in Rev. xix. And on each of these occasions we see the people of God differently, or rather variously, occupied. And there is beauty, force, and significancy in it all; for *the manner in which faith occupies itself will be found to be suited to the character of the judgment.*

Noah witnessed Divine judgment on *sin*, and his own deliverance, through grace, out of it. He worshipped, rendering a burnt-offering to the Lord. (Gen. viii.)

Lot was rescued—saved so as by fire—and suitably with such a fact, we get no altar, or sacrifice, under his hand. He was pulled out of the fire, and that was all. (Gen. xix.)

Israel in Egypt, like Noah, witnessed Divine judgment on *sin*, being in like manner, themselves delivered by grace. And like Noah, they worshipped, celebrating their redemption by a feast on a sacrifice, eating of the lamb whose blood was sheltering them. (Ex. xii.)

Israel on the shore of the Red Sea, different from this, were delivered from *the hand of enemies*, judgment on whom they were witnessing. They, therefore, had a song—as well became them on such an occasion. (Ex. xv.)

Deborah was in the same conditions, the same relation to Divine judgment. She witnessed God's judgment on *the enemies of her people*; and therefore, like Israel on the Sea, she and Barak have a song. (Judges v.)

The Church on earth witness God's judgment upon *sin*—and by their feast, like Israel in Exodus xii., they celebrate their own redemption. They rehearse, with

thanksgiving, the salvation of God, in the Lord's Supper. (1 Cor. xi.)

The Church in glory witness God's judgments *on the world*, anticipating their own kingdom—and consequently, like Israel on the Sea, or Deborah in the Book of Judges, they have a song prepared for their heavenly harps. (Rev. v.)

The martyred Remnant, in their day, have a song—for the judgment they celebrate is upon *the enemies that had withstood them*, after the manner of Israel on the shore of the Red Sea. (Rev. xv.)

The heavens triumph with a great shout, when she that had been corrupting the earth with her fornication falls under the hand of the Lord. (Rev. xix.)

Here we have variety in the way in which faith occupies itself in a day of Divine judgment. There are judgments on *sin*, and judgments on *enemies*; and corresponding deliverances by *grace* and by *power*. It is seasonable to sing, when a judgment on enemies has been accomplished, and a deliverance out of it by power; but a judgment on sin, and our deliverance by grace, (we ourselves having been guilty and exposed to the judgment,) have rather to be celebrated in a worshipping, chastened spirit. There was, therefore, no song in Exodus xii.; there is a song in Exodus xv.

But in the midst of all this, Abraham's act and attitude are as full of beauty and fitness and significancy as anything we see in these cases. He surveyed a scene of judgment upon sin—but he had not been in danger of the judgment, he had had no part in the sin that was judged. He had not been exposed to it. He had had nothing to say to the cities of the plain. In

this his story differs from that of Noah—for Noah was in the scene of judgment—and from that of Israel in Egypt, or of the Church of God on earth. They, like him, witness the judgment of sin—but they had been exposed to it themselves, and were delivered by grace and the blood of Jesus. Not so, Abraham in chap. xix. He needed no personal deliverance from the judgment that had visited the cities in the plain of Jordan; but he surveyed it. He had heaven's relation to it. He stood in the contemplation of it on that height where he had, the day before, been with the Lord.

EXODUS XII., XIII.

At the opening of Exodus xii., we find the beginning of the year changed. It is not said why this was to be, but simply, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year unto you." This was an intimation to the people of Israel, that they were to enter on some fresh connection with God, to take up some new character before Him, or to be recognised in some new relationship; and that this was *necessary*. "This month *shall*' be unto you the beginning of months." And this was said to them while they were still in Egypt, the place of death and judgment, the place of nature or of the flesh.

The intimation thus given at the very outset, was very quickly explained. "God is His own interpreter"—for the very next moment the congregation are introduced to the Lamb of God, whose blood was to shelter them from the sword of the angel; that is, to be their full plea and answer to the throne of judgment where righteousness sits.

This is simple and clear and blessed. Israel are at once taught this—that the new character in which they were now to walk with God was that of a blood-bought people, a redeemed, ransomed generation. This was the form which the new life, the new year, on which they were now entering, was to take. This was their

new creation, their second birth. They were new creatures, being reconciled sinners.

This truth takes a New Testament form in 2 Cor. v. 16-19. The new creature is that sinner who walks with God in the faith and sense of reconciliation. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, *who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.*" This is man beginning the new year, entering on a new life, being a new creature, as a sinner reconciled by the paschal blood of Jesus. So in 1 Peter i. 25. He is declared to have been born again by the word which the Gospel has preached to him; and that Gospel is the message of redemption through the blood of the Lamb. By this he becomes a kind of firstfruits of God's creatures. (James i.)

The early intimation of new creaturehood which we had here in this twelfth of Exodus, is thus soon interpreted—and the interpretation is confirmed by one and another scripture in the New Testament. But there is much more than this in analogies between these chapters and New Testament Scriptures.*

At the close of chapter xii., we find Israel, now redeemed themselves, acting upon others. They are taught how to deal with "strangers." They were to tell them, that they were as welcome to come into the regions of the new creation as they had been—that they might eat of the Passover with them, or celebrate re-

* The structure of John iii. is like that of this Exodus xii. For there the Lord begins by telling of the need of being born again, or of being a new creature, but does not, till afterwards, interpret how that is to be. (See ver. 3, and then 14, 15.)

demption with them ; only they were to be circumcised as they had been. They must renounce themselves in the flesh, or in the old-creation condition, and then they may enter on the new year with them, the new life, the new-creation of God in Christ Jesus. There must be no confidence in the flesh, but a rejoicing in Christ Jesus—this is the circumcision. (Phil. iii. 3.)

The Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament, is the leading, formal witness and depository of this evangelic ministry of the redeemed. There the saints are seen addressing themselves to “strangers,” and doing so in the simple style of this Scripture—xii. 43-49. So that we are still breathing the atmosphere of the New Testament when we read these verses. We are in company with the Spirit which afterwards animates the Book of the Acts. In the reconciliation of the paschal blood, the blood of the Lamb of God, we tell all around us, that the kingdom is theirs on their being born again, on their faith in the One who died for our sins, and was raised again for our justification. “We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us,” we still say to “strangers,” “be ye reconciled to God.” (See the chapter already quoted, 2 Cor. v. 20, 21.)

How sweet, how convincing, how precious it is, thus to find ourselves in the mind and with the principles of the New Testament, as we read these very early oracles of the Old !—But there is more of this.

The saint is to take heed to himself, as well as to address himself to “strangers.” And to take heed to himself, order his ways, and nourish his soul, in the peculiarities of the calling of God, and after the mind

of the Spirit. This we next find in chapter xiii.; and this we also find, formally and characteristically, in the Epistles of the New Testament.

In chapter xiii., we see the Israelite of God, now redeemed by blood, and thus set in God's presence and fellowship, carrying himself according to this his place and calling. He finds his springs in God, his motives and sanctions, and secret effectual virtues in that which God has done for him. He purifies himself—keeping the feast of unleavened bread; he devotes and dedicates himself—rendering up his first-born and his firstling to the Lord; and if he be inquired of, why all this cleansing of himself, why all this devotedness, he simply pleads what the Lord had done for him, when he was in Egypt, a bondsman there in the place of death and judgment. This is all he has to say, though he be challenged again and again. His springs of moral life are known to rise in the salvation of God.

This is truly blessed. This says to the living God, "All my springs are in Thee." And this is the language of the new creature in Christ Jesus, as we see him in the Epistles of the New Testament. So that in this thirteenth chapter, we are still, as I have said, in New Testament atmosphere. For there it is the *mercies* we have received, the *promises* which have been made to us, the *grace which has brought salvation*, the fact that we are *bought with a price*, the great Gospel mystery that we are *washed from our sins*, a sprinkled, redeemed, sanctified people, which are recognised as the springs of all moral behaviour and personal devotedness—of course to have their efficacy in us by the presence

and power of the Holy Ghost. (See Rom. xii.; 2 Cor. vii.; Titus ii.; 1 Cor. vi.; Rom. vi.)

And another remembrancer of the temper which we find in the New Testament is in verses 3, 4, of this same chapter. There, Israel is told to "remember" the day of their deliverance. This is surely, as I say, in the temper or spirit of the New Testament. So much so indeed, that the standing ordinance in the midst of the saints in this evangelic age, is a feast of remembrance. (1 Cor. xi. 23-26.) And other scriptures of the same New Testament teach us, that this remembering is to be the very business of eternity, or of the life of the redeemed in glory. (Rev. i. 5; v. 9.)

THE CLOUDY PILLAR.

WE are all of us in wealthier places than we are aware of, and have far richer interest in Christ than we are disposed to allow. Many quickened souls scarcely dare to stand in the justification of their persons; and yet they read of "justification of life." (Rom. v. 18.) "The glory of God" in their own history as sinners who have received Jesus, has still to be learnt in some of its further brightness.

This suggests to my remembrance the Cloudy Pillar that accompanied the camp of Israel—and I am too much attracted by this object, not to turn aside and look at it for a little space.

Israel in Egypt had wondrous witness of what God was to them. Plague upon plague, in which they had been preserved, had swept through that land; and in the night of the Destroying Angel, the blood on the lintel had sheltered them. The Cloudy Pillar had also begun to lead them on the way out of the land. Still, after all this, when they came to stand between the host of Egypt and the Red Sea, all this was as a thing forgotten. They feared and murmured.

How dull we are to learn, how slow of heart to believe, the secrets of grace and the faithfulness of God! Whether Israel stand at the edge of the wilderness in

presence of the Cloudy Pillar, or, as I may say, whether disciples stand at the grave of Lazarus in the presence of Jesus, (Ex. xiv., John xi.) we see this.

But again and again He proves that it is not in Him we are straitened.

That mystic Pillar, as I may call it, accompanied the Camp all along the road from the very heart of the land of Egypt to the very borders of the land of Canaan. That is, as soon as it was wanted till it was wanted no more.

It lets us know likewise, that it had many and various virtues in it, and all of them suited to the rising and changeful exigencies of the people. It did not travel along that road but for the sake of Israel. It was there, because Israel was there. It was therefore what Israel needed it to be. It was the condition of the camp, be that what it may, that drew out its secret glories and virtues. This was its character. Thus we read its history.

As soon as Israel have been redeemed by the blood on the lintel, and have started on their journey, this Pillar meets them, and sets itself before them to be their Guide. They are about to enter on a trackless waste. No man dwelt where Israel was soon to travel. There were no land-marks, no sign-posts there. Its barrenness would demand bread from heaven, its drought water from the Rock, but its pathlessness would as surely need a Leader—and He who was to open angels' stores for them, and rivers in rocks, would raise for them a Pillar to be cloud by day and fire by night, that they might still be on their way, whether by night or day. And thus they would be independent of highways

and sign-posts in the *trackless* desert, as they would be of cornfields and vineyards in the *barren* desert.

But the Pillar was much beside this, to Israel. It was not merely cloud and fire alternately, as day and night succeeded each other, it was also light and darkness at the very same moment, when Israel needed such a thing.

The host of Egypt had come out, and were pressing on the heels of the children of Israel; and then, the Pillar puts itself between the two hosts; and instead of being lighted and luminous throughout, it becomes darkness on the side turned to the Egyptians, and light on the side turned to the Israelites, so that the one could not come nigh the other. It was a shield now, as it had been a conductor before. It is just whatever the people wanted. This is the due account to give of it. This was its way. It expressed the grace of Him that had now saved Israel. It is alternate cloud and fire, if the camp need that; light and darkness at the very self-same moment, if they need that.

And much more still. There is One who has made that Cloud His dwelling-place, whose look will prove the overthrow of all those who plot mischief against the camp. The flower of Egypt withers under it; Pharoah's horses and chariots are drowned in the Red Sea before it. "The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot-wheels, that they drave them heavily."

What glories fill that wondrous place—what energies as well as virtues for Israel's use! And how do these disclose themselves as Israel needs them!

And further. It can express rebuke and resentment when this becomes healthful discipline for Israel. In the days of their murmurings again and again, the glory in the cloud lets them know that its rest had been disturbed. It appears to them in the day of the manna, and of the spies, and of the rebellion of Korah; and they see it in the consciousness of Divine and righteous anger. It is like the resentment of the grieved Spirit which the saint of God is now conscious of. And all this shows that the Cloud was not simply the companion, but the *interested* companion of the camp. It felt *with* as well as *for* their condition.

But again we find that if it thus rebuked and resented when discipline was called for, it was ready with all readiness to welcome and answer the approaches of faith. When the Tabernacle was reared up by the willing and obedient people, and in them faith had accepted the communications which the Lord had made to them by Moses touching the order and furniture and services of His house, how did the Glory at once and with evident delight fill that house, and the Cloud rest upon it! (Ex. xl.) With what wholeness of heart and soul did the Lord own the place where faith had met the rich provisions of His grace!

Oh, what various glory and virtue are thus seen in this mystic companion of the camp of Israel. It has light for its guidance, terror for its enemies, a shield as impenetrable as the thick darkness itself for its security—it has rebukes for its waywardness, and the richest, readiest encouragements and consolations for its faith—and further still it is unwearied even to the end, and will wait on Israel till they need it no more.

This we see in Deut. xxxi. There the patient, gracious, faithful Pillar, as I may call it, is seen again, just as the journey of the wilderness is closing.

The camp had brought upon itself a pilgrimage of forty years, when they might have had but a journey of a few months. They are sent back from Kadesh-barnea to the Red Sea, because of their sin and provocation, but the Pillar will surely go back with them. It will compass one wasted mountain after another, and take the road from one wilderness to another, if Israel have subjected themselves to these desert-wanderings. And it is unwearied. We see it at the end, as we have said, in Deut. xxxi., as we saw it at the beginning in Exodus xiii.

And now, the application of all this easily suggests itself.

As we read in the blessed story of the Evangelists, the disciples saw the doings of the Lord day by day; and yet, in spite of all that, they were at their wits' end again and again, when fresh difficulties arose. The hunger of the multitude on the shore was too much for them; the winds and the waves on the lake were too much for them. The Lord had to disclose again and again, like the Pillar of the desert, the secret virtues which were in Him for their rebuke and illumination. His glories in grace and in power, His sovereignty over the forces of nature, and His resources in the face of the barrenness of nature, all were brought forth according to the demand of the moment.

And, like the Pillar, he was unwearied. He went with the disciples from the beginning to the end. And it was surely patient, suffering, unweariedness. He

took them up as ignorant fishermen on the shores of the sea of Galilee, and He never leaves them, though at the end he found them pretty much the same ignorant fishermen still. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip," He had to say, just at the closing of His sojourn with them. But then, a fresh disclosure of Himself is made in answer to this; another ray of His glory is let out, and He adds, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

And so is it again, after this same manner, on the eminent occasion of the eleventh chapter of John. The Lord lets the sickness of Lazarus end in death. He stays where He was till He could say, "Lazarus sleepeth"—for then He could bring forth Himself in this form of Divine glory, "I go that I may awake him out of sleep." It was at the *grave*, and not merely at the sick bed, that He was to be displayed or glorified. It was in the place of the full fruit, and apparent, temporary triumph of sin, that "the glory of God" was to be seen. No less spot could give occasion to the manifestation of that glory in its brightest form. And there, too, disciples were to learn the exhaustless stores which He carried in Himself for the meeting of all their need, and the consummation of all their blessing.

Much of the Divine glory, in the person and works of Christ, had been already revealed to the family of Bethany, and to the disciples who are now gathered at the grave of Lazarus. Andrew and Philip had, long before this, left the presence of the Lamb of God, satisfied and happy. (John i.) Peter had owned Him as the One that had the words of eternal life. (John vi.) John

and James, as well as Peter, had seen the Transfiguration. (Matt. xvii.) The dear household at Bethany had welcomed and entertained Him, served Him with their best, and heard His words as with ravished hearts. (Luke x.) These are among the many witnesses that had already given in their several testimonies to what He was and who He was, in the presence of that people who were now around the grave of Lazarus. And yet, they were, one and all of them, betraying their ignorance of the full glory that belonged to Him, and of the Divine energies that had their springs in Him, and were ready to exercise themselves at His good-pleasure. None of them as yet knew that He could say of Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life." They were all talking of death. There was virtue in "the last day," they could acknowledge; (verse 24;) but none of them were in the secret of "the first resurrection." They had known Him as the Christ, and gone to Him as sinners, seeing His glory (as I may take leave to express it) at the grave of their *souls*, but they had not as yet counted on seeing it at the grave of their *bodies* whenever it was His good-pleasure to have it so.

There was a further treasure in Him, and in Him for them, that hitherto they had not apprehended. The Cloudy Pillar where the Glory dwelt had virtues in it for the use of Israel, which this New Testament Israel, like their brethren of old, had not reckoned on. For we are all in wealthier places than we are aware of. And the patient, gracious Master still goes on with us even to the banks of the Jordan. Peter had found out his death-stricken condition, without the Son of the living God, and he had said to Him therefore, "To

whom shall we go ; thou hast the words of eternal life" —but Peter has still to learn that the sepulchre in the garden is empty, (John xx.,) and that the sepulchre at Bethany shall be so. For he shall be in the company of his Divine Master even to the end, though as yet he knows so imperfectly the glories and virtues that lie hid in that Pillar of this desert, ruined world.

IN Exodus vi. the Lord publishes His Name. It is a Name suited to the *then* condition of Israel. They were groaning in Egypt. Task-masters and brick-kilns were oppressing them. The Lord lets them learn Him in characters of faithfulness, grace, and strength, exactly suited to such a condition. He tells them that He remembered them, heard their sorrows, had His undertakings to their fathers before His thoughts, and was about to rise up for their deliverance. They were oppressed, and He was a Redeemer—that was all—that was the Name He was publishing, because that was the Name they needed—that was the character which their circumstances needed to find in Him.

IN Exodus xxxiv. He publishes His Name again. But it is a very different Name, a Name that has respect, not to *strong enemies*, but to *disobedient, rebellious people*—a Name, therefore, full of *pardoning grace*, and not of *delivering strength*. For this was the new Name which the then present condition of Israel needed. The people had now troubled themselves, and it was forgiveness they wanted; before, Egypt troubled them, and it was strength and deliverance they needed.

Connected with forgiveness, they learn that God will *correct* or *discipline* them even to the third or fourth generation.

How wondrous these two publications of His Name are! How fine a witness they bear to us that if we will but call upon Him, He will deal with us as our souls need. If *others* be against us, He will *deliver*; if we are faulty ourselves, He will *correct* but *forgive*.

EXODUS XXXIII.—LEVITICUS IX.

AFTER the people are convicted of sin, when they had made the Golden Calf, it is shown us, I believe, how they learnt *Christ*, and found their relief in Him, putting on the garment of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness.

They are seen in Exodus xxxiii. looking after the Mediator as he enters the Tabernacle of the Divine Presence—their attitude there bespeaking the anxiety of the soul to find out some remedy outside themselves for all the mighty and fatal mischief which they themselves had just wrought.

When Moses returns the second time from the hill, (chap. xxxiv.,) bearing the Tables of Stone, his face shines with a brightness that they found to be intolerable. They had not reached “the end of the law,” and therefore, under conviction, they could not stand the law. They had stood it in chapter xxiv. 17. “They were alive without the law” then—*i.e.*, they did not know their own condition as sinners, and the uncompromising character of the law, and they looked at the fiery glory *undismayed*. But now that “sin revived,” *i.e.*, sin was understood aright by their consciences, because “the commandment had come” with power, they “die,” they take the sentence of death into themselves, and Moses’ face, representing the law, is intolerable. (See Rom. vii.)

Moses then tells them about the Tabernacle, and its furniture and provisions, and they at once set themselves to do *all* that he tells them. Their state of conviction accounts for this. Get a soul this day under conviction, and he will readily attend to any Moses, to any one who he knows to be nearer the Lord than himself, and in the secret of peace. “Good Master, what good thing shall I do?” is the language of such an one. And so here—the convicted Congregation, still ignorant of the relief, feeling their present distress and amazement of heart, gladly listen to Moses’ word, and do all that he commands. Their zeal is such that they have to be restrained; (chap. xxxvi.); for all they can do may well be done to hide them from themselves and the intolerable glory of the law.

The work proceeds, and the tabernacle is set up. (Chap. xl.) All the detached materials are set in order—the house of God takes its due form; the holy places and the courts, the dwellings of the ark, the table, the candlestick, and the altars, are all arranged in their fit relations to each other, the Glory enters the house, and the Cloud covers it.

But the people are not relieved. They have been *obedient to directions*, but they have not yet *apprehended Christ*. They have been brought under conviction, and also led to the *materials of their deliverance*, if I may so speak. The way of escape is shown them; but they do not as yet understand it, nor can they, therefore, use it, or rejoice in it. Many a one hears all about Christ, but does not as yet know His value for themselves.

The scene, however, proceeds. Moses gets instruc-

tions as to the offerings. (Lev. i.—vii.) Very largely and fully all this is detailed to him—but the people are not addressed, much less relieved. The time, however, is at hand.

Moses is directed to get them all to the door of the tabernacle—not for the purpose of *making* the tabernacle and its furniture, but of *learning* it. And they accordingly take their stand at the door of this mystic house, while Aaron is consecrated, and while he goes through all the services of his office. They bring their sin-offering to him. This they had never done before. They bring their sin-offering to him, and see him go through the services of the altar for them. And then—the Glory appears, and the Fire from heaven takes up the sacrifice from the altar. (Lev. viii., ix.) They see this, each one for himself, and they are relieved. They have reached *deliverance*. *They witness the acceptance of the victim, and the grant or display of the glory as the fruit of such acceptance.* They bow and worship. They pass from a state of *conviction* into the consciousness of *deliverance*. To them the veil is rent from top to bottom. What do they want more? What do we want more at this moment? The sacrifice is accepted in heaven as it went up for them. It pleaded *their* cause, and the plea was *heard*. What more does a sinner need? And the richest thing with which God could seal this is granted—the Glory itself comes forth to them.

EXODUS XXXV.—XXXIX.

Look at Israel in Exodus xxxv.—xxxix., bringing their gifts to the Sanctuary, and making the materials for it. Did they know what was to come forth out of it all? No. All that Moses told them was, what they were to bring, and then what they were to make, and that the result would be a Sanctuary. But how each thing was to be disposed of, what place each was to fill in relation to the rest, and what the general effect of the whole was to be, they knew not. But this did not hinder them *offering* and *working*. The great result lay in Moses' hand. And accordingly, when they had made all, Moses arranged all. (Chap. xl.) The confusion ceased—and the heaps of things made by them, strewn under their eyes, were reduced to most perfect order, and not only to order, but made to disclose the most precious mysteries and secrets of Divine counsel and grace. They gave in faith, and laboured in faith. They knew but little. But they trusted. And the end so vindicated all their confidence, that they fall down and shout in holy triumph. (See Lev. ix. 24.)*

* Levit. i.—ix. is to be read in connection with Ex. xxxv.—xl., because all the results of the faith which gave and worked for the Sanctuary do not come out till Lev. viii., ix., when Aaron uses the garments which are made for him in Ex. xxxix.

EXODUS XXXIII.—XL.

A STRANGE and wondrous secret shows itself as we pass at once from the opening chapters of Genesis to the closing chapters of Exodus. I mean from these facts—in the one, we see *the Lord God preparing a dwelling-place for man*; in the other, we see *man preparing a dwelling-place for the Lord*.

At the opening of Genesis, the Lord God builds the heavens and the earth, and furnishes them. He then plants a garden in Eden, the chosen spot on the earth for that purpose, and there He sets the man whom He had created, and blesses him with all manner of blessings, crowns and enriches him, and gives him a helpmeet, so that he has to utter the fulness of a heart that was satisfied to overflowing.

We know how man soiled and lost this his goodly estate, and was sent forth, in righteous judgment, from the garden to till the ground for a common livelihood. But the Lord God became a stranger in His own creation also. An unjudged scene of pollution and corruption could not be His place. He could not rest in it, and be refreshed by it, as once He had been in the sight of creation as it came forth under His hand, clean and pure and perfect. He visited His elect that were in it; but when He had done talking with such, as we

read, "He went His way." Sin had defiled it, and separated Him from it.

This is continued.

In process of time, He separates a people to Himself out of the nations of this defiled earth. He redeems them to Himself by blood, and they are made a peculiar people, separated, I may say, as He Himself already was. And this people in due time, and after the fitted manner, and in the right character, prepare Him a dwelling, a tabernacle for the entrance and occupation of the Glory, as we see at the close of the Book of Exodus.

As of old the heavens and the earth had been created, the garden of Eden planted, and man set therein as his dwelling-place, crowned and espoused, and satisfied in full measure of blessedness, and all this of God for him, so now, the tabernacle is made and furnished and raised up of man for God, and the Glory enters it and the Cloud rests on it, and the Lord God delights in His new dwelling-place, as Adam had in his.

This is wonderful. There is something mysteriously excellent and precious in this contrast between the opening of Genesis and the close of Exodus. But we have more to notice in it than this.

It was, of course, in *sovereignty*, in the exercise of His own high, prerogative, good pleasure, that the Lord God had, at the beginning, built and furnished a place for man—it is now, in *obedience*, that man prepares a place for God. The Lord God Himself had directed this Tabernacle to be made. He had shown every part of it, in patterns, to Moses; and in full, exact conformity with such patterns, had all things now been

made. Just as had been prescribed by the Lord, so was everything done by Israel—and just as the Lord Himself had looked on all that He had created and made, according to His own Divine good pleasure, and pronounced it good, and rested in it and blessed it, so Moses now looks on all that Israel had made, and being according to God's commandment and prescription, Moses pronounced it, in like manner, to be good, as I may say, and blessed the people. And then, keeping all still in His sovereign hand, the Lord commands Moses to put it all together, and to raise it up in its sanctuary form; and Moses doing so, still in the spirit of obedience, the Lord, in the symbols of the Cloud and the Glory, takes possession of it as His habitation.

Here is, again I say, something wonderful, something mysteriously excellent; that, though the Lord builds for man, and then man builds for the Lord, yet is there infinite distance between them; the Lord doing this according to the will of His sovereign rights and pleasure, man doing this simply as obedient.

There is, however, much more to be seen in this.

This raising of a dwelling-place for God was, as we see, an act of obedience, and the obedience of faith, obedience to a revelation. Disobedience to a command, breach of law, had at the beginning, deprived Him of a place in His own creation; but now, obedience, the obedience of faith to a revelation, had built Him a place for His glory. But we have still to see who they were that were thus obedient, in what character the people of Israel had erected this Tabernacle for the Glory. And here we are introduced to very blessed and needed truth.

We must go back from chapter xl. to chapter xxxiii., to get satisfaction upon this—but there, we are abundantly satisfied, and very graciously and happily instructed.

Israel had destroyed themselves under the law, under their own, or the old, covenant. Having made the golden calf, they broke the first article of the law, and were to be cut off from the land. But the Mediator stays the execution of righteousness; and under his words (brought to them from the Lord) they take a new place, they assume a new character; they strip themselves of their ornaments, and seek the Lord in the place to which He had retired outside their camp.

This was, by conviction, taking the place of sinners in the sight of God. And this was a new thing. But this was the only thing that the Lord could possibly accredit. It was the only true thing, the only real place; for they were sinners, and they must be as sinners before Him. But being convicted, they let the Mediator know, that he was all their confidence. They look after him as he enters the place to which God had come down, they leave their tents, they stand, every man at his door, and from thence, as convicted and humbled, while bowing and worshipping, they look towards the Mediator.

This was beautiful—the second step in the path of a convicted sinner. As stripped of their ornaments, they go outside the camp, as though they were unclean, and let the Mediator know that he is all their confidence. And he does not, he could not disappoint them. I will not go particularly through the scene of his intercourse with the Lord, as they are together face to face, and

speak as a man with his friend. But this we may see, and this we may say—that Moses uses his place and his intimacy, altogether in the cause of Israel. The earnestness with which he pleads with the Lord that He would own Israel as His people, and give them the benefit of the grace in which he himself was standing, it is beautiful to see—and we know in all this he represents One greater than himself, that he is but the shadow or reflection of the true and only Mediator. But he succeeds. He could not, as he proposed, make an atonement for them—that lies in the hand of Him who, in the volume of the Book has it written of Him, that He said, “Lo, I come,” for whom “a body” was prepared—but he gets the Lord and the camp together again, under promise that Canaan shall be reached. The Mediator did not disappoint the hopes of the people. He was withdrawn from them all this time. They saw him not, but he was serving them in God’s presence with this earnest, devoted, self-surrendering love.

At length he comes back to them, and he brings with him, as I may say, two things; *glory on his countenance*, and *patterns of what he had seen on the mount*. The glory that he carried on his countenance was the expression of the law, and they found it intolerable—the patterns were the shadows of good things to come, witnesses of grace, or of God’s provisions for sinners, and they are called upon to adopt them as their only way of blessing. They do so. This was the obedience of faith, the obedience rendered by convicted sinners to the revelation of God’s provisions in grace for their condition. And with full earnestness of heart they render this service of faith. They bring

their offerings to this work with *willing hearts*, and work at this work with *skilful, divinely instructed hands*.

All this, it is very happy, indeed, very needful, to see. 'Convicted sinners, who have by faith accepted God's provision for their ruined condition, are the artificers of this tabernacle which the Lord was about to occupy. And they make it, as with ready hearts that had been kindled by His grace, and with skilful hands that had been gifted by His Spirit.

All this is chiefly to be considered. When we speak of man preparing a dwelling for the Lord, it is only in such a character as this, and in such a way as this, that such a work could be done. God could take nothing from man, save as man took the place of a convicted sinner. But let him humble himself, God can exalt him. Let him by faith receive God's provisions for his self-incurred state of guilt and judgment, and then the Lord will receive from him tribute and service and worship, and, as shown in these great chapters, a dwelling-place for His glory. For Solomon, speaking by inspiration of God, says, as indeed Moses and the obedient camp of the wilderness might have said, at the close of the book of Exodus, "The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness. But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever." (2 Chron. vi.)

What can be grander and more excellent in the ways of God and His grace! The Gospel in much of its brightness shines out here—for the Lord is there accepting the services of convicted sinners who by faith use His provision for their state of ruin and condemna-

tion. Yea, He is still dwelling in sanctuaries which faith, through the operation of His Spirit, prepares for Him—as, speaking of the Father and of Himself, the Lord Jesus says, concerning each of His loving saints, “We will come unto him, and make our abode with him”—and the Apostle speaks of the assembly of the saints, as “a habitation of God through the Spirit.” (John xiv., Eph. ii.)

And in connection with this, let me say, in what marvellous ways the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God, is more than a Repairer of all breaches, or than a Restorer of paths to dwell in. He is that surely—but He is more than that.

We know how all that has been from time to time entrusted to man has in man’s hand failed, and disappointed (I speak as a man) Divine expectations. Adam in Eden or in the fair untainted creation. Noah in the new world. Israel in Canaan. The house of David on the throne. The house of Levi in the sanctuary. The Gentile with the sword and the power, as an earthly god. The Candlestick. All have proved untrue. But all purposes in these, all Divine expectations in each and all of these, will be answered and realised by Christ. The earth will bloom again. Israel, and David, and Levi, people, king, and priest, will be all in their several place and service in the days of Messiah. Government in the world will be in righteousness, and the Church be presented in full beauty, a glorious, spotless Church.

All this will be so, as in the hand of the great Repairer of all breaches. But more than this. At

the beginning, the Lord God prepared a Sabbath. Adam profaned it. In due time Jehovah prepared another Sabbath in Canaan and in Solomon. Israel and the house of David profaned it. But now, blessed to tell it, Christ has prepared a Sabbath for God. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," said He, addressing the Father. And God has entered this Sabbath. He rests in the finished work of the Lord Jesus; and He will rest in it for ever.

Wondrous and precious mystery! Man, the first man, Adam, profaned the Sabbath which God had hallowed—man, the second man, Christ, has perfected and prepared a Sabbath for the Lord God, and He will enjoy it for ever.

We may well say, Christ is a Repairer of breaches, yea, and much more, to His praise, in admiration of the ways of God.

A THOUGHT ON EXODUS XL. AND ACTS II.

THE Tabernacle is set up in Exodus xl., the Old Testament house of God. The Lord enters it and adopts it. The Cloud rests on it, and the Glory enters into it.

So is it, though in another form, in the New Testament house of Acts ii. The Holy Ghost, as a rushing mighty wind, enters into it, and cloven tongues like as of fire sit upon it. This is the Lord, (though again I say in another form,) adopting this latter house, as He had adopted the former. The house was now a *living* house, and the Lord *personally* enters it, bringing with Him His gifts, symbolised by the cloven fiery tongues. The house of old had been a material, and thus but a *shadowy*, house, and the Lord had entered it as the Glory, the *expression* or effulgence of the Divine presence.

We have, however, in connection with these things that are kindred in the two houses, to mark a strong contrast.

As soon as the Lord had seated Himself in the Old Testament house, He speaks—as we find in the opening chapters of Leviticus, which immediately follow Ex. xl. But He speaks as One that was seated there to be worshipped or to be reconciled. If His people apprehended Him in any measure of His divine worthiness, they might accordingly bring Him a burnt or a

meat offering. If they valued communion with Him, they might bring Him a peace offering. If they found their conscience defiled by reason of any transgression or short-coming, He was there to receive a sin or a trespass offering, that the breach might be repaired, and atonement or reconciliation perfected. He therefore announces the offerings and the sacrifices, and delivers the laws of them elaborately and distinctly, as soon as ever He has taken His seat in the sanctuary. This is so.

From the New Testament house, the Spirit speaks, in like manner, as soon as He has entered it. Through the vessels which He had now filled, He speaks—as the Lord God, of old, had spoken from the tabernacle of the congregation. (Lev. i. 1.) But here is the contrast. He speaks of “the wonderful works of God.” It is not again of what man was required to do, either as a worshipper or a confessor; as when the Lord had spoken from the former house; but of what God had already done in behalf of man. Peter’s words are a sample of this—and they rehearse God’s wonderful works in Christ; how He had approved Him in the days of His flesh—how by His counsel He had been delivered up to death—how He had then raised Him from the dead, exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven, and made Him both Lord and Christ.

These are among “the wonderful works of God,” which the Spirit through His vessels was rehearsing, the works of God in grace to sinners; such as the ministry, death, resurrection, and glory of the Saviour of men. This is what the Lord of the Temple was now doing. He was not speaking of what either thankful

worshippers or convicted saints had to do, but of what He, the God of salvation, had already done. Very fitting surely it is, that the blessed One should be worshipped and satisfied—served by our sacrifices of praise, and sought unto by our confessions and humiliations. Through the eternal ages of glory, it will be the grateful as well as fitting business of His ransomed creation to worship Him. But still, if there be the good thing, there is the more excellent thing even with God. In redemption He shines as with fuller glory than in creation—and as He has said Himself, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.” So is it a higher thing, a New Testament thing, in contrast with that which was Old Testament, to find Him preaching or publishing His deeds of grace for us, rather than announcing His rights and His demands to us and from us.

Surely again I may say, this is so.

Faith, too, I would add, has its good way and its more excellent way. I would illustrate what I mean.

There is a disposition in some of us, to keep the Lord before us as the One who has been rejected and cast out here, and is, during this dispensation, a heavenly Stranger, accepted on high as the One disallowed on earth, a martyr at the hand of man. All this is so surely; and good and healthful for the soul it is, to have this sense of things upon it. But if this become exclusive or even predominant, it will tend to legality and a spirit of bondage and fear. If the Lord be seen unduly in this light, it will dispose us to many an accusing, self-condemning exercise of soul; for we must surely find out how little worthily we are in living,

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practical companionship with this rejected Christ of God.

We must, the rather, cherish a disposition or tendency in our souls, to know Him in the grace which He is ministering to us, in the love that He has declared He has to us, in the eternal security which His blood imparts to our condition, and the sure and bright blessedness He is preparing for us. If the other be the good way of faith, this is the more excellent way. As He once revealed Himself, as we saw before, in a good way, and then in a more excellent way, first in the Old Testament house, and then in the house of the New Testament; so faith has to exercise itself towards Him in kindred good ways and more excellent ways, such as these.

In the course of the Divine reasoning in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are instructed to see the Lord in the heavens, in these two attitudes or characters. For He is revealed to be there, as "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool," having been cast out here; and as "the Purger of our sins," the accepted, glorified Friend of sinners, for whom the highest place in heaven is only good enough.

We should eye Him in both, surely I know—but in the latter attitude and character the rather—for this is the "more excellent way" of faith—the way, too, I might be bold to say, which is the more acceptable to Him. See proofs of this in the Canticles.

In that little book, the exercises of the soul are not characteristic of one that was striving to be an imitator or follower of Christ in His place of martyrdom among

men, but of one who knows His love, and desires to know it better, ashamed of honoring it so poorly. Christ is there rather an *object* than an *example*. The soul is occupied in making discoveries of Him, and growing in the enjoyment of Him—and He is occupied in ministering those discoveries, and encouraging those enjoyments. And this He does, in surprising grace; telling us that He is making kindred discoveries of His saints, and tasting responsive kindred enjoyment of them.

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THE HEAVENLY CALLING

AND

THE CHURCH.

THE heavenly calling has been known from the beginning. The earth having been, in every age, a scene of Divine disappointment, (to speak after the way of men,) and the elect being therefore strangers and sufferers in it, the heavens have been disclosed to them as their place of rest and inheritance. Abraham desired a heavenly country. Enoch had been already translated there. Moses lost the land of promise, but got the Pisgah of God. David confessed that he and all his fathers had been strangers with God in the earth. Elijah among the Prophets in the latter days of the Old Testament, as Enoch among the Patriarchs in its earlier days, was taken to heaven. And thus, the heavenly calling was had in constant remembrance, and kept in view. And all the elect, in these Old Testament times, whether Patriarchal, Mosaic, or Prophetic, have, I doubt not, a part in the heavenly places. The Lord calls them all "children of resurrection"—and by that He teaches us that they will be called to their inheritance by resurrection from the dead, when they will not, as He further teaches, marry and give in marriage, as though they were children of the earth.

In the Divine reasoning of the Epistle to the Galatians, they are alluded to, and considered as standing in *sonship and heirship*, with the elect now gathering.

So, in the Hebrews, they are considered as *perfected and sharers of the heavenly calling*, with us of this day.

But the Epistle to the Ephesians never takes them up to associate them with the saints now gathering in *the body of Christ*.

These distinctions are very significant, and they lead us to the conclusion that the Old Testament saints enjoy the heavenly calling, or heavenly places as their home and their inheritance, though kept apart from the Church, the body of Christ, and the Bride of Christ. I may say this concerning them.

But leaving these times of the Old Testament, times of Patriarchs and Prophets, and having entered the New, we reach in due season the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is then on earth, upon the glorification of the Son of Man in heaven; and we find Him doing a work of "exceeding riches of grace," and which is to be to "the praise of the glory of God" in the ages to come. He is baptizing the election now gathering, into one body; a body of which Christ is the Head; a body which is also called "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And the whole, Head and body together, is called by an eminent, wondrous title, "Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 12.)

All this is peculiar indeed.

Of course this election, thus forming the body or fulness of Christ, will, with the Old Testament saints, have their place and inheritance in heaven. But while

they thus share the heavenly calling with their Old Testament brethren, those brethren will not be in the body of Christ with them. When the Kingdom in its glorious form comes to be displayed, when "the world to come" is reached, Old Testament saints will have "a name" there, and be, as it were, principalities and powers in heavenly places; but the election now gathering, and baptized into one body, will then be "the fulness" of Him who sits above those principalities and powers and names, of Him who "fillet all in all."

I am suggesting and submitting my judgment on these truths.

And then—as I would go on to say—when all these have been translated to meet the Lord in the air—when Old and New Testament saints together, as alike "children of the resurrection," have taken their place in the heavens, as thus ordained to be theirs from the beginning—then the action of the Apocalypse, from chapter iv., begins. In the course of that action, some saints of God will die as martyrs; and such also will be taken to heaven, and there occupy their places as certain dignities and thrones, "a noble army," or "a goodly fellowship," as we may say; but they will not be a part of the body of Christ with the election now gathering.

Those saints of God who survive the great judicial process of the Book of the Apocalypse, will form the seed or firstfruits of the earthly people. Their calling is not heavenly. They have no part in the heavenly places. They begin to fill and furnish the millennial earth; and to them as a firstfruits will be gathered a harvest, till the face of the whole earth be fruitful—

Jerusalem, the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the nations all the world over, constituting a scene of power and of government, and a sanctuary for the service of the God of heaven and earth, who will then be displaying his Kingdom-glories.

And this Kingdom is the subject of notice in the scriptures of the Old Testament, together with the judgments which introduce it, and the glories which give it its character. But the calling out of a body for Him who is the Head of that Kingdom, is not the subject of those scriptures. It is called, in an eminent sense, "the mystery," and is declared to have been "hid in God from the foundation of the world," and only now revealed to the prophets of the New Testament, Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles being made the great vessel and depositary of it, its special witness and publisher.

There have, however, been glances at it from the very beginning; the Divine mind letting out hints of the secret it carried, now and again, as we ourselves are wont to do with some favourite thought of which we cannot or dare not speak particularly, times and seasons forbidding it. Is not this so? Is not this so with us, and do we not delight in seeing it thus with God and His secret? In spite of such forbiddings, in the face of such restraints, however respected they may be, and rightly so, the secret will at times break bounds, and cross the field of our vision in a type or in a story, leaving the eye of many a gazer unable to make out what it is or what it means.

Such glimpses of this brilliant secret I would now look at for a moment or two, having already travelled

from the beginning to the end of Scripture, as "with all saints," noticing the destiny of the Old Testament saints, of the election now gathering under the Holy Ghost, and of the Apocalyptic saints, whether they die in the course of it, or outlive the action of that awful season.

I believe, then, that "the mystery," the Church, the Bride of the Lamb, begins to tell itself out in the first Woman. She was taken, as we know, from the side of Adam, when he was cast into a deep sleep; and she was then formed by the Lord God for Adam; and finally set at his side to be his help-meet, and in a sense and measure, his co-ordinate companion.

All this tells us of the Bride of Christ. (Eph. v.) The same mystery, in different phases of it, is to be read in the stories of other women in the book of Genesis, as in Rebecca, in Rachel, and in Asenath. And so, in the Book of Exodus, in Zipporah the Gentile Bride of Moses.

It is very easy to read something of the Church in each of these. Ephesians v. has surely encouraged us, and led us in the way, and given us a sample of the manner in which we are to read these types.*

I cannot doubt that the Gleaner in Leviticus xxiii., is also a like mysterious or typical person. She is introduced in the interval of the story of Israel and of the earth, or, between the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. For a parenthesis of about three months in the Jewish ecclesiastical year, we lose sight

* One has noticed, that the language of Ephesians v. is in the style of the delight of Adam when he received the Woman whom God had prepared for him. See Gen. ii. 23, Eph. v. 30.

of everything but this Gleaner. She is but a poor Stranger. She has entered the fields of the lords of the soil, not to covet or usurp, but as a Stranger to come in, and as a Stranger to go out, satisfied, as it were, with "food and raiment," which is the Stranger's fare, and the Christian's or the Church's contentment. (Deut. x. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 8.)

I say not, that Ruth may not be a like figure with the Gleaner of Leviticus xxiii., for she enters the scene also in an interval that breaks the story of Israel; as between their utter moral ruin at the close of Judges, and their revival at the opening of 1 Samuel.* But I grant that we may, the rather, see in Ruth the Remnant of the latter day coming in on the Gentile terms of sovereign grace, according to Romans xi. 31.

But such Old Testament types are but faint indeed. The mystery of the Church is specially disclosed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is there spoken of under two titles, which are exclusively its own. It is "the body of Christ," and "the bride of Christ."

One has strikingly said, "It is not in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in angels themselves, bright witnesses as they are of creative power, that the character and ways of God will be manifested in the ages to come: it is in the new, redeemed creation in Christ, in the Church and by the Church, that God's manifold wisdom will be made known. In the Church, brightest emanation of the Divine mind, masterpiece of God's handiwork, every perfection of light and glory

* The Church, as we know, enters the scene just when these Gleaners do, in a time when a break in the story of Israel has been experienced.

and beauty shall be displayed ; otherwise she would be unworthy of her high destiny as the Bride. The depths and heights of the grace and love and power of God will never be known to the heavenly hosts, till they behold the Church, chosen from Adam's ruined and apostate race, not only brought into the closest and sweetest intimacy of sonship to God, but exalted to the highest dignity in heaven, a partaker of the ineffable glory of her risen Head."

Surely these words are good for the use of edifying.—But further. In unfolding grace and glory in this Epistle to the Ephesians, (which Epistle I would now consider somewhat particularly,) we may observe that there is a peculiar accumulation of language, as I may express it, as though the Writer (the Spirit) were conscious of what a theme of peculiar weight and dignity he was treating. We read of "the glory of grace," of "the riches of grace," of "the exceeding riches of grace," of "the praise of His glory," and of "the praise of the glory of His grace." This is the style in which the magnificent secrets of this Epistle are brought out to view. The casket is according to the treasure.

And the sight given of the ascended Lord is in the same style presented to us. It has been observed by another, that St. Mark tells us, that our Lord was carried up *into* heaven. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that He was carried up *through* the heavens. But this Epistle tells us, that He ascended up *far above all heavens*. (Mark xvi. 19; Heb. iv. 14; Eph. iv. 10.) What a varied, wondrous account of Him! But the Ephesian account is the most magnificent—for it gives

the Son of Man the very place which is given to God Himself in Deuteronomy x. 14.

And this accumulation of language, of which I have spoken, is preserved in the second chapter, where the Spirit comes to look at the objects of this high calling, and not, as before, at the character of the calling itself. He takes knowledge of us sinners in two conditions, *dead* and *alienated*; dead as in ourselves, alienated as from God—and then he sees us as translated into the opposite conditions of *life* and *nearness*. But He accumulates language, in treating of these things, as He had done before. Terms are multiplied, descriptions are repeated elaborately, that all these conditions in which we are presented, and each of them separately, may be apprehended with great emphasis by our souls. The death-estate in which we lay by nature was awfully complete; the life-estate into which we are now brought, is thoroughly, eternally perfect. Our condition of distance from God, in which grace found us, is described to have been such that nothing could pass beyond it—our present condition of nearness to Him is such as the Son Himself alone could have enjoyed, so to say, before us.

But further. The characteristic of the Church's blessing is this—that they are *in Christ*. Earlier saints, as we have seen, will be heavenly in their destiny; but the Church's calling is heavenly, *in and with Christ*.

The word “in” abounds there in a remarkable manner—and it is always in “Christ.” In the course of the wondrous disclosures there made, we learn that

having been quickened together *with Him*, we are now seated in heavenly places in Him.

Being thus ascended, we are also taught that, there on high, we are *blest with all blessings in Him*.

And again—we are *accepted in Him, the Beloved*—made the objects of personal love, as well as blessed with all spiritual blessings.

And again—in Him God has abounded towards us in all wisdom and knowledge, making known to us His thoughts and good pleasure touching ages to come; giving us the place of friends.

Thus is it with us *now*.—But this same scripture looks forward and backward, and shows us the interest we had “in Christ” before the world was, and what we are to have “in Him” when the world has run its course. Ere the world was, we learn that we were “chosen” in Him, and “predestinated” unto the adoption of children. And when the world shall be over, and dispensations have finished the display of themselves, and closed their wondrous story, we learn that we shall be “heirs” in Him and with Him of that great new system, “the world to come,” in which all things shall be gathered together under Him as their Head.

This is a great theme indeed—our eternal portion in Christ, our standing in Him, with the counsels that purposed it ere the world was, the high condition and prerogatives in which it now puts us, and the portion which it will convey to us in the ages to come. And all this excellent estate is ours, simply because we now believe or trust in Him.

But that which had been thus “chosen in Christ”

from before the foundation of the world, was "hid in God" till revealed by the Spirit to New Testament prophets. And the revelation of it completed the Word of God. (Col. i. 25.) It was the closing, crowning disclosure, made specially through St. Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Church is called into the highest place of dignity, and the revelation of it is in the last, the latest place in the communications of God. Yes. The *Church* has been revealed the *last*. The Gentile Apostleship has brought it forth. Though chosen in Christ before the world, and hid in God for ages and from ages, it now stands revealed, the crown of all His purposes, as it is the last of all His communications.

I ask, Is this strange? Must this be a surprise, or are we prepared for it? Has Scripture, has God Himself in His Word, prepared us for such a thing as this, such a method as this?

I believe He has. We get other like things, things kindred with this, in Scripture.

The Woman was the last creature revealed or brought out in the work of creation. Adam was at home, in his estate, and in his dominions, ere he got the Woman. All the provisions of the Garden were his. He had been crowned the lord of all he surveyed. He had named all cattle, beasts of the field, and fowl of the air. He was in his dominions, as well as at home, and in his estate. But the Woman was not yet. She comes forth the last—but the crown of his joy and the perfection of his condition. (Gen. ii.)

So with *Jerusalem* in Canaan, as with the Woman in Eden.

The land itself had been subdued and divided. The sword of Joshua and the lot of Eleazer had done this, centuries before. But Jerusalem was still a stronghold of the Jebusite. It was still the possession of the Gentile. The Judges had ruled in their several day, and Saul had reigned. But Jerusalem was as nothing all that time, unvalued, unrevealed. At the last, David reduced it to the hands of Israel; and he beautified it and furnished it. It became the throne and the sanctuary, the great centre of attraction, the object of note in all Scripture, whose beauty and dignity is an exhaustless theme. The Spirit in Scripture celebrates it again and again; Israel, in the days of their nation, had their delights there, keeping feast-days and holy-days in her; and our scriptural thoughts are still full of her. She is the gem, the pearl, the queen, the object, in the land and in the story of Israel.—The last again is the chiefest. The Jerusalem of Canaan is as the Woman of Eden.

And so again with the *Golden City* of Rev. xxi.

The judgments which were to clear the Inheritance and to take out of the kingdom all that offended, have been executed. The victory of the white-horsed Rider and His army has been won. The reign of the thousand years has been set. (chap. xix., xx.) But as yet the Bride has remained unrevealed. But now at the last, in the very close of the Book, as we take leave of the unspeakably precious oracles of God, it is the Woman we see, the Woman again of Genesis ii., the Jerusalem again of the land of Israel—only, it is the heavenly Woman, and not the Eden-Woman, the heavenly and not the earthly Jerusalem. She now, the

Lamb's Wife, stands revealed, the chiefest in Divine workmanship, the latest in Divine revelation.

Is there not, then, I ask again, kindredness in all these things? May we not be prepared to find that excellent thing which was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to remain hid in God for ages, and brought out only as the revelation of all secrets was about to be completed, and the Word of God to be filled up?

Surely there has been a rich and wondrous unfolding of the secrets of the bosom! *Home-secrets* are made known, as well as *kingdom-glories*. We are to stand by and see the way of God again.

When Israel had got beyond the fear and the sword of the Destroying Angel, and, under the conduct of the Cloud, had reached the neighbourhood of the Red Sea, they were commanded to stand still and see the salvation of God. (Ex. xiv.) They did so—and that salvation displayed itself in vast and wondrous forms of grace and power which till then had been hidden. They had already known redemption by blood. The first-born had been already delivered, and the judgment of God was now left behind. It had spent itself, and they were safe. But, the Glory in the Cloud, the rod of Moses, the Angel that waited in the camp, all had now to disclose some rare and wondrous virtues which as yet, up to that moment, had not been told. The Angel changed His place and came between the camp of Israel and the host of Egypt, to keep the one apart from the other all the night. The rod of Moses commanded the waters of the Sea to stand up as an heap. The Glory looked out from the Cloud and troubled the

Egyptian army. Strange, mysterious powers, new and surpassing revelations of grace! Israel is safe and quiet and triumphant, and have only to go forward, and sing the song of victory and deliverance, of present service in the sanctuary, and of coming glories in the kingdom.

So here, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the sinner has been already rescued by the blood of Jesus. Sins are forgiven—and the saints, thus beyond judgment, are summoned to listen, till the high calling of the Church in Christ Jesus under the exceeding riches of the grace of God, like the salvation of God at the Red Sea, discloses itself in their hearing. They have but to listen. If they talk of responsibility, this is it; to listen, to accept, to be happy and thankful, because all this is what it is, and the God of all grace is to them what He is. And the Apostle, who teaches them these rich and marvellous secrets, only prays for them, that as they listen, they may have hearts to understand.

His prayers for them, whether in the first or third chapter, give us other samples of that accumulation of language, of which I have already spoken, and which is so expressive of the consciousness of having to deal with themes and thoughts of very peculiar weight and dignity.

As we get in on the fourth chapter, we come into company with something wonderful in its way, like that which we have seen already.

The captivity of man under the hand of the old Serpent, in Genesis iii., was complete. Satan's lie was accepted, man became a sinner, separate from God, and

lost : Eden was forfeited, the ground put under a curse, the man and the woman under penalties, and Satan as a liar and a wanderer went about on the face of the earth.

This earliest story of man's captivity is glanced at in Ephesians iv.—as by contrast. The Captor himself with all his host are now made captives, (a captive multitude,) and by man's Deliverer led in triumph, or made a show of openly, as another kindred Scripture speaks. (Col. ii.) But this Deliverer has proved Himself not only mighty after this manner, but glorious. He fills all things. He has both descended and ascended—has been in the lower parts of the earth, the grave, the very stronghold of the Captor ; and is now far above all heavens. And such an One, this Deliverer, mighty and glorious, has taken it upon Him to write the history or secure the fortunes of Satan's old captive. And it is wonderful, as we further read in this chapter. Having wrought the deliverance in the lower parts of the earth, He has now in the highest places, far above all heavens, received gifts for the former victims of the Serpent ; and has dispensed them ; and through them has endowed them with the richest portions and highest dignities. These endowments have brought the ancient captive of the great enemy to perfection ; made him, in a divine, spiritual sense, independent ; given him security against the wiles of the deceiver ; and set his resources *within himself*, through the Holy Ghost given to him. (See ver. 8-16.)

It may surprise us at first to find such a thing as this—the ruins of man in Genesis iii. thus confronted by the recovery of man in Ephesians iv.—the gain and

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triumph of the old Serpent there, answered and annulled by his shame and overthrow here. But so it is. And surprise may cease, when we remember that the Epistle to the Ephesians, as we have seen, is the most marvellous exhibition of the results of redemption, which Scripture presents to us. We may, therefore, expect to find Genesis iii. confronted in such an Epistle. It is the special writing on the Church which is "the Body of Christ" and "the Bride of Christ"—the first of these titles telling us that she is set in *the very highest place of honour*; the second of them telling us that she is set also in *the dearest and most intimate place of personal affection and relationship*. She is made, moreover, to the creation of God, to principalities and powers in heavenly places, the great witness, the only adequate witness, of grace, glory, and wisdom; of the exceeding riches of grace, of the praise of glory, and of the manifold resources and secrets of wisdom. She is this—and the revelation of her, again we may remember, has completed or filled out and up to its full measure, the Word of God.

It has been observed by another, that the calling of God of old was either of *individuals*, that they might walk with God; or of a *nation*, (as that of Israel,) that they might observe the statutes and do the laws of God their King. But now, the calling of God is into a *body*. But though this is so, the individuality of the saint is still contemplated; and the Epistle to the Ephesians keeps this in view, addressing us emphatically in our personal, individual places, in chap. v.

This is suited, seasonable truth, at the close of this wondrous Epistle. And surely we ought to know our

personal standing, our own individual perfection, ere we occupy ourselves with the calling of the Church or the Body. Accordingly, in another place, the Apostle lets the saints know, that he would speak of such wisdom, the wisdom of these Divine mysteries, only among them that were perfect. (1 Cor. ii. 6.) And so here, in Ephesians we are individually chosen, predestinated, forgiven, accepted, instructed, sealed, (according to chap. i. ;) and then, we are prayed for, that we may have that spirit of wisdom and revelation which capacitates us to learn our Church-calling, the strength that is leading us, and the glory that we are to reach : "The Church corporately is composed of individual believers ; and while viewed in its corporate character, it has relations to Christ which the believer individually has not—for no believer is the Body of Christ or the Bride of Christ—yet, it is in the affections and conscience of the individual believer, that the relations of the Church to Christ are to be recognized and have their effect."

Surely this is so. Individual saints are first perfected, under the given Spirit, and then the Body is edified—as we have in chap. iv. 12. The precepts, which we find from chap. iv. 17 to chap. vi. 9, address us individually ; but the Church-state is assumed or contemplated here and there throughout.

And here, let me say, as to precepts, that the calling itself, the grace in which we stand, might direct us, without precepts. This thought is sanctioned by such passages as Tit. ii. 11, 12, and 2 Pet. iii. 11, 14. The saints in Genesis act without law or precept. Their calling suggested their duties. "How can I do this great wickedness," said one of them, "and sin against

God?" The grace in which New Testament saints stand might do the same. Still they are called to listen to precepts—as here in this portion of the Epistle to the Ephesians. But the precepts strikingly honour the doctrines. They commonly either refer to, or tacitly assume, the doctrines; and thus, as I may say, they present themselves as so many expressions of the *moral* virtue which lies hid in the doctrine.

And further. They let us know, that holiness must have a dispensational character. It is not simply moral virtue, such as conscience would suggest: it is not legal righteousness, such as the law might demand: nor is it what John Baptist would have prescribed. It is *Christian*. The holiness, or the due character, of a saint, is to derive itself out of the Christian calling. It finds its springs and sanctions in Christian truth. It measures itself by that Word which now addresses itself to us, and which delineates our dispensational place and peculiarity. It is the sanctification of the *truth*, the washing of water by *the Word*, that is looked for. It is this which gives definite character to the morals which God accepts, and which the Spirit works. And this is what is very much neglected or passed by, but which, to be in the light as God is in the light, must be heeded.

But there is still another thing in this Epistle. There is conflict or wrestling. We see the *walk* of a saint in Eph. v., his *fight* in Eph. vi. His walk lies through the chequered paths of life, the circumstances and relations which make up human history. His fight is with "the wiles of the devil," or with "spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."

These wicked spirits come forth from heavenly places—and they come with lies and deceivableness of infinite variety. 2 Chron. xviii. is a direct witness of this. There, a spirit is seen to come forth from heaven with a lie in his mouth; or with a lie which he puts into the mouth of one of Ahab's false prophets. And that lie leads Ahab to the fatal battle of Ramoth-gilead.

The Serpent, at the beginning, entered the garden as a liar, and with one of his "wiles" ruined the man. (Gen. iii.) Satan, with another of them, tempted David to number the people, and led him to a terrible day of retribution. (1 Chrn. xxi.) This same character of a deceiver is recognized in Rev. xii. 9, xx. 8. And signs and lying wonders and all deceivableness of unrighteousness are spoken of as the working of Satan in 2 Thes. ii., 9-10.

Thus we have wicked spirits in heavenly places exercising "wiles" here in the midst of us.

These wiles, these lies of "the rulers of the darkness of this world," may be multitudinous; such as, infidel suggestions, perversions of truth, devotional human superstitions, confounding of things which dispensationally differ, false calculations touching the world's progress, and the like. How solemn the thought! But how well to be told of these wiles, and thus to be put in preparation for them. Distinct instances of these wiles are again noticed in 2 Cor. ii. 11; xi. 3; 2 Tim. ii. 26.

It is with these wiles we have to wrestle. In other characters, (as when he is a liar or a persecutor,) we may have to fall under the enemy. For our fight is not with flesh and blood, as was that of a Joshua or a David. God sent them forth to such conflict, having put armour upon them that was suited to meet flesh and blood.

But it is in no wise so now. Not one piece of our armour would do for the battle at Ai, or for the day of the valley of Elah. Our enemies are not the Amorites or the Philistines. It is armour fitted to meet the corrupter of the truth, him who ceaseth not to pervert the right ways of the Lord. (Acts. xiii. 10.) It is, the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.*

The whole age through which we are passing is regarded as "a war," with occasional fights or "evil days"—and therefore the Apostle says to us, "That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

These "wiles," too, may become "fiery darts." That is; these lies and deceivings which at all times are abroad, may now and again, in some shape or another, be levelled directly and personally at ourselves.

And it is striking to observe what this one Epistle teaches us about these evil principalities and powers. It tells us, that they are *Christ's captives*, the *saint's enemies*, with whom he has to wrestle, and *the rulers of the world's darkness*. (iv. 8; vi. 11, 12.)†

But here I might add, (though our Epistle does not suggest it) that the present ruler of the darkness of

* Satan is an *accuser of the Brethren* in heaven, (Job i.; Rev. xii.) On earth he is an *accuser of God*, (Gen. ii.) and a *persecutor of saints*. (Job. ii.; Rev. xii.) But the Apostle here speaks only of his wiles or deceivings.

† It has been observed by another, that Ephesus is exhibited very specially as having been the scene of those wicked spirits that practise their lies and deceivings. (See Acts xix. 19.)

this world is doomed to take a solemn journey by-and-by. He is to be cast out of heaven where he now is, and act on the earth only. He is then, in season, to be taken from the earth and put into the bottomless pit. He is then, as taken out of the pit, to be given over to the lake of fire, or his eternal doom. (See Luke x. 18; Rev. xii., xx.)

And this, I may further add, is the very contrary or opposite journey of that of the Lord. The Lord came from the grave as a Conqueror. He had been "death of death and hell's destruction." He returned to the earth, tarrying there for forty days, giving pledges and promises touching His future kingdom here. And then, He ascended to the highest heavens, receiving all power, and sending down the Holy Ghost to dwell in His saints, and prepare them for Himself in the day of exceeding glory, when He shall be displayed as filling all things—according to this same Epistle.

Here we end, save the very conclusion, which has, however, a character in it that I must notice.

The Apostle speaks of himself as "an ambassador in bonds." What another witness was he, then, at that moment, of the character of the world which he had just recognized as under the rule of the powers of darkness! God's ambassador was put in prison by the world into which He had sent him! Does one nation treat the representative of another in this way? Is not the person of an ambassador sacred?

But man's prisoner is God's freeman; and in the care of thoughtful love, from his prison-house he will send messages of sympathy and comfort and encouragement to his loved brethren hundreds of miles away from him beyond the seas.

THE ATONEMENT-MONEY.

EXODUS xxx. 11—16.

THE simpler our apprehension of "atonement," or "reconciliation," (the same thing,) the happier. It implies a change of condition towards God. Instead of being at a distance from Him, we are brought nigh—instead of being in a state of enmity, we are at peace with Him. Such is our *condition*. Whatever experience we may have of it, our condition is that of peace with God, when we have received the atonement which has been accomplished by the blood of the Cross.

But this reconciliation, this condition of peace with God, rests on the fact, that God finds His satisfaction in what Christ has done on the cross for us. My peace with God depends on His satisfaction in Christ. If God did not rest in Him and His work for me, I could not rest in God. If God's demand, in righteousness, against me, had not been answered, I could have had no warrant for talking of reconciliation, or taking my place in peace before God. I was God's debtor—debtor to die under the penalty He had righteously put upon sin. Christ acted as my Surety with Him. He undertook my cause as a sinner. If God had not been satisfied as to my responsibilities to Him, I should still be at a distance from Him, He would still have a question with me, a demand upon me and against me.

Therefore I ask, Has God been satisfied with what Christ has done for me? I answer, He has, for He has let me know this by the most wondrous, glorious, magnificent testimonies that can be conceived. He has published His satisfaction in the Cross of Christ, in Christ as the Purger of sins, by the mouth of the most unimpeachable witnesses that were ever heard in a Court where justice or righteousness presided to try a matter. He tells me that all His demands against me as a sinner, are fully, righteously discharged.

The rent vail declares it. The empty sepulchre declares it. The ascension of Christ declares it. The presence of the Holy Ghost here (gift as He is, and fruit, of the glorification of our Surety) declares it.

Were ever such august testimonies delivered on the debating of a cause? Were witnesses of higher dignity, or of such unchallengeable credit, ever brought forward to give in their depositions? Were depositions ever rendered in such convincing style?

The sequel is well weighed. Peace with God is our condition, a condition settled by God Himself. For we plead the Cross of Christ as our title to peace, God Himself having declared that He and all His demands against us are satisfied in and by that Cross. God rests in Christ, and so do we.

My *experience* may be cold and feeble. It is so surely. It may be blotted by doubts and fears, and other affections, of which I ought to be ashamed. But my *condition* is sure and strong—just as the throne of God itself. The Purger of sins has been raised from the death by which He answered for sins, and has been taken up to that throne as such Purger, and if He can

be moved, so must the throne where He sits. If He be disallowed there, the word and call and voice of God that summoned and seated Him there, must be gain-sayed and disallowed also. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God," is to be read as setting out our *condition*, rather than our *experience*. By faith in the death and resurrection of the Lamb of God, we are justified, are in a state of acceptance with Him, standing in Divine righteousness, or "as the righteousness of God." This is our state, our condition before Him, our relationship to Him. Our experience may not measure it—but such it is; though surely our experience should be as our condition.

But let me look a little particularly at Exodus xxx.

This ordinance of the atonement-money tells us, that God appropriates His elect to Himself, only as a *ransomed* people. And surely we know that to be so. If we be not ransomed, we are not His. If we are not in the value of the blood of Christ, we are not numbered to Him as of the lot of His inheritance, or as belonging to Him.*

Before the institution of this ordinance, this had been a recognized truth. It was the first-born, whether of man or of beast, that was His, in the land of Egypt, because it was the first-born who had been ransomed. (Exodus xii., xiii.) And after this time, in the day of the New Testament, we learn the same. The Lord Jesus says to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." (John xiii.) And surely, again I may say, we know that this is so; only we have it here, among a

* The act of numbering is the symbol of appropriation. To number things expresses ownership of them. Psalm cxlvii. 4.

thousand others, in the mouth of these three witnessess ; by the testimony of the Passover, by the testimony of this ordinance of the Atonement-money, and of the word of his Lord to Peter in John xiii.

But this ordinance not only tells us, that we are thus to find ourselves among the people of God, by being a ransomed people—a people who make mention before Him of the blood of Christ, and of that only, bringing with them into His presence the atonement-money, and that only—but it also tells us, that He Himself has fixed and settled what that ransom or atonement-money shall be.

This is full of consolation, when we think of it. We learn all about the way of coming to God *from Himself*. We have not to reason about it, but to accept His account of the matter in all its characters. Every Israelite had to present himself to God with his half-shekel, which was called “the atonement-money.” Whether he were rich or poor, made no difference. He had not to measure his offering himself, the Lord had prescribed and settled what it was to be. And each and all appeared together in virtue of one and the same ransom.

So that we gather these conclusions, in all clearness and decision and simplicity. It is the Divine good-pleasure, and the sure revelation of God, that God have His people with Him and before Him only as a ransomed people—the price and quality and measure of the ransom being settled entirely by Himself, so that they have not to object or to question, be they who they may, rich or poor—and that, in this way, all His people are not only thus reconciled and brought home to Him, but

linked in one and the same salvation, and animated by one and the same spring of triumph and exultation.

The conscience of a sinner, instructed by Scripture, may therefore indulge itself in these thoughts and assurances. The true half-shekel, the real atonement-money, and that is "the blood of the Lamb," is the consideration, the full, adequate, settled consideration, on which the covenant of peace rests. It is a *righteous* ransom. God is just while He justifies the sinner who trusts in it. The Lord Himself says of it, "This is the new covenant in my blood." It is called "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and it is preached to us that by virtue of it, God, as "the God of peace," has "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep," a Saviour-Shepherd for sinners. (Heb. xiii. 20.)

And I might add to this, and to what I have already said, that the adequacy of this mystic half-shekel, this precious blood of atonement, is finely set forth in contrast with the insufficiency of all other sacrifices, in Hebrews x. 1-18.

The insufficiency of all the Levitical offerings, is there concluded from the testimony which they bare themselves. Out of their own mouth they are judged—and no judgment can be of a higher quality than that. Thus, the fact that he who made those offerings, the Priest in the Levitical sanctuary, only *stood* before God, having to go out again from the Divine presence, in order to repeat the same sacrifice in the appointed time.—The fact that such repetition was made year by year, thus keeping *sin*, and not the remission of it, in *remembrance*.—The solemn recognition of the insuffi-

ciency of those sacrifices or offerings, by Christ Himself, when, in the volume of the book, He comes to present Himself as ready in the cause of sinners, to do God's will.—And then, the impossibility of the thing itself, that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin.

In contrast with this, we get the adequacy of the blood of Christ strikingly testified and concluded.—The fact that He is *seated* in the heavenly sanctuary, as having satisfied God by the sacrifice He has offered, and accordingly greeted and welcomed, and made to take His place for ever before God as the Purger of sins.—The fact also, that He is now occupied with thoughts and expectations of His coming kingdom, needing no more to think about sin and the atonement for it, as He did, in the volume of the book, or in the day of settling the terms of the everlasting covenant.—And the further fact, that the Holy Ghost, in the new covenant which is sealed by the blood of Christ, tells of *remission* of sin; not as did the Levitical priests over the sacrifices they offered, of the *remembrance* of it.

This is all encouraging and assuring. But I must add another thing. The adequacy of the true half-shekel, the true atonement-money, is not to be rested simply on the fact of its being *appointed* by God, but on its own *nature*. It is appointed of God, because of its nature, because of its intrinsic adequacy. It is a half-shekel “of the sanctuary,” having been weighed in the balances of the holy of holies, and found of full value before the throne of God. We are not to say, the blood of the Lamb is the *appointed* way, as though God might have chosen or taken some other. We are rather to say, it is the *only* way, for in that sacrifice, but in

that only, God is just, and the Justifier of sinners. It is the price, the only price, which measures the debt, which satisfies the balances of the sanctuary, and which gives the sinner an answer to the throne of righteousness. Blessed mystery!—it does all this. So that the Apostle loses himself in admiration, as he gazes at this great sight, as he meditates on that sacrifice which had the virtue of “spotlessness,” and of “the Eternal Spirit,” in it. We see him treating with some scorn and indignity the thought of the blood of bulls and goats; saying, “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.” But with fervency of spirit, as one that was losing himself in wonder, love, and praise, looking at the Cross of Christ, he says, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (Heb. ix. 14; x. 4.)

THE KINSMAN.

THE Kinsman under the Law had to do two services—to redeem either the person or the inheritance of his brother, if either had been sold to a stranger; to avenge the wrong done to his brother, whether (I may say) it were captivity or death.

These things are seen in Leviticus xxv. and Numbers xxxv., where (as the Englishman's Hebrew Concordance shows us) the word for "kinsman," "redeemer," and "avenger" is the same.

This person, the Kinsman, was, as we most surely know, a type or a shadow of the Christ of God. In riches of grace, the Lord has undertaken these two services for us; ransoming us from the rightful, righteous claims of God by the sacrifice of Himself, and thus redeeming us and our inheritance; and likewise avenging us on the head of our enemy, delivering us from him who has the power of death.

Thus is it in the shadow and in the substance, in the type and in the original.

As far, however, as these legal ordinances teach us, as far as these writings of Moses instruct us, we see in the Christ of God only one of the human family, a brother, partaker of flesh and blood with the children, the seed of Abraham, His kindred. He must be that, or nothing could or would be done for us. The Christ

of God must constitute Himself our Kinsman; and this He has done by incarnation, by taking on Him the human nature in and from the womb of the Virgin.

But as we go on, when we leave the *Law* for the *Prophets*, we get another fact; and it is this—that this Kinsman is “the Lord of Hosts,” “Jehovah,” “God.” There, in the Psalms and Prophets, very abundantly, repeated again and again, taken up not as a truth to be proved, but as a fact assumed and built upon, various names of God are found in company with the word used under the *Law* for Kinsman.

There is something blessed in this—something, too, great, glorious, and magnificent. The mystery of the Person of the Christ is thus anticipated, and that, too, in the most artless and persuasive manner. The manhood and the Godhead are found in the one Person.

When we come to the New Testament, leaving the *Law* and the *Prophets* for the *Evangelists* and the *Apostles*, we get this same mystery, not however letting itself out in shadows and prophecies, and at different times and in various manners, but declared distinctly as a fact, and taught in its need and value. *Evangelists* tell us the *fact*, *Apostles* unfold to us the *necessity and the value* of the fact.

But what a sight this is! We may well turn aside and see it, for God Himself has shown it to us. “How can we sink with such a prop?” How can the throne of judgment, which weighs the claims of God and maintains the rights of righteousness, how can that throne deny the plea which faith pleads before it? It says—“The great God is my Kinsman, and He has done a kinsman’s service for me.”

This is so. We are as righteously brought back to God by the blood of Christ, as we were, at the beginning, righteously banished from Him by our own sin. Adam was in the presence of God again, when he had heard and received the tidings of the bruised and bruising Seed of the Woman, with as righteous a title as afore, under a righteous sentence, he had been forced behind the trees of the garden. The Lord God Himself owned his title, making him a coat of skins and clothing him. The Woman's Seed was his Kinsman; flesh and blood with himself; and He was to stand up and do a Kinsman's part, avenging and redeeming him, dying and rising for him.

The mystery of the Kinsman has thus been revealed and known from the very first. Other circumstances in the same earliest Book of Genesis illustrate it; and thus, though the ordinances of the Law, as we have already noticed, embodied and formally presented the duties of this personage, he was seen and known before the Law.

To pursue this a little further, we may observe, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Lord is presented to us both as Avenger and Redeemer; and He is shown to act in such characters in *His full Person*, as the God-man, Jehovah's Fellow and man's Kinsman.

In chapter ii., for instance, we see Him as our *Avenger*. Through death He destroys him that had the power of death, and delivers us who, through fear of death, were in bondage. This is the act of a Kinsman-avenger. But this same Scripture shows us that He did this service for us as the One who having been "the Son," "the Sanctifier," took flesh and blood with

the children, and thus made Himself (Son though He were, Jehovah's Fellow,) our true and very Kinsman.

In chapter x., we see Him as our *Redeemer*. He pays the ransom. He re-purchases us from Him who had full righteous claim to us and against us. By the one offering of Himself He perfects for ever them that are sanctified. But this He does also in the same Person. For He is seen in this same Scripture as One who could come, as in full personal independence, to the throne, and say, "Lo, I come;" and then, "without spot," and "through the Eternal Spirit," offer Himself. But a body was prepared for Him; a human body formed in the Virgin's womb, and taken therefrom; flesh and blood with the children. And thus, in this one Person, He has satisfied the altar, answered the demands of the throne, and purged the conscience of the believing sinner.

These are glorious notices of the Old Testament Kinsman found in the New. And they are found in that portion of it where we might naturally expect to find them—in that writing which the Spirit has addressed to believers of the Hebrew nation, the nation that had been under the law.

This is but little on such a blessed mystery—but I will say no more.

Jehovah's Fellow and man's Kinsman, in one Person, undertaking as the Christ, or under Divine commission and anointing, the cause of sinners, is the ground of everything.

THE REDEMPTION OF THE INHERITANCE.

WE have four Scriptures, in distant parts of the Word, which find connection with this subject, "The Redemption of the Inheritance." I mean Lev. xxv. 25; Deut. xxv. 5-10; Ruth iv. 1-10; Jer. xxxii. 6-15.

The ordinance in Lev. xxv. teaches us, that an Israelite might redeem or buy the inheritance of an impoverished kinsman, out of the hands of him, whoever he were, to whom it had been sold; and then he might hold it till the year of Jubilee, when, as we further learn, it was to return to the original owner.

The ordinance in Deut. xxv. teaches us, that an Israelite was bound to marry the widow of his brother, if that brother had died childless, and raise up seed to his brother, so that his name and his inheritance might be secured in the firstborn of that marriage. If he refused to do this service to his deceased brother, he was put to public shame, a mark of degradation being affixed to him.

These ordinances are illustrated in Ruth and Jeremiah. In the beautiful history of Ruth, we find Boaz doing this part of a brother or a kinsman in Israel according to the ordinance in Deut. xxv., in a very special and admirable way. The inheritance of Mahlon, an Israelite of Bethlehem-judah, had been sold, and his wife, by birth a Moabitess, had been left of him, a childless and penniless widow. She had nothing but her virtue, the

unstained excellence of her character and reputation. She was a stranger, who at the cost of her own diligence and labour, supported her mother-in-law, her late husband's mother, for whose sake, in the spirit of a true or adopted daughter of Abraham, she had left home and country and father's house.

Boaz redeems her inheritance, and marries her. He does not fear the marring of his own inheritance, but devotes himself to the interests of his deceased kinsman, and the childless and penniless widow he had left behind him. And by this marriage, and this redemption of the inheritance which accompanied it, the house of Mahlon is revived, and led up to royal honours, the very first and highest estate of wealth and dignity in the land. For David, who sat on the throne of Israel, the most eminent in all the genealogies of Israel, was the fruit of it in the third generation.

This was a great and magnificent illustration of Kinsman-virtue.

In the course of the Book of Jeremiah, or in the history of that Prophet, we find him, (though not in the same way with Boaz in the book of Ruth,) doing a Kinsman's part. While he is in prison, (as he was in King Zedekiah's reign, for the truth's sake,) and while the Chaldean army is seated before Jerusalem, threatening its doom and the captivity of its people, Hananeel, his uncle's son, comes to him, and tells him, as his Kinsman, to buy his field that was in Anathoth, the city of their fathers. This was a strange appeal to make at such a time to such a man. But Jeremiah does not hesitate. He knew it was the Lord's will, and he pays down his money, and buys or redeems the

field of Hananeel, his uncle's son; though he knew that it might prove, if left at the mercy of circumstances, a fruitless bargain; or at least, that very distant time must be reached, ere he could acquire actual possession of his purchase. This was a great acting of faith, and another fine and noble illustration of Kinsman-virtue.

The ordinances, I may therefore say, in Leviticus and Deuteronomy *prescribe* these Kinsman-duties; and then, the histories of Boaz and of Jeremiah, in these beautiful and admirable ways, *illustrate* these duties.

But we have more than this—for these doings of Boaz and of Jeremiah anticipate, as in types and figures, the ways of our Lord Jesus, who, having made Himself our Kinsman, has, in ways that outshine all analogies, done a Kinsman's part. Yes, indeed—and I need not say it—these illustrations of Kinsman-virtues in the persons of Boaz and Jeremiah are outdone and outshone in the bright and wondrous and perfect ways of the Son of Man—for He, surely, like a more self-sacrificing Boaz, at a price that cost Him everything, has relieved not only a childless, penniless Kinsman, but one guilty and ruined and sold into dishonourable captivity; and like a better Jeremiah, has waited now for a long season and through an age of sore rejection for the inheritance which He purchased with His own blood in the day of Calvary.

But this I would still further look at. The Lord Jesus is a Redeemer in two respects, a Redeemer by *purchase* and by *power*. He is a Redeemer by the price of His blood, purchasing us and our inheritance thereby from the righteous claims of God, so that God

is just while justifying and blessing us. He is a Redeemer by the strength of His arm, rescuing us and our inheritance from the hand of the great enemy. So that in "the world to come," where "the redemption of the purchased possession" will be displayed, we shall be able thankfully to look at the blessed God, and know Him to be satisfied by our Redeemer, and boldly look at our great adversary, and see him conquered by our Redeemer. And this will be a high condition indeed. "Purchased" and "rescued," the subjects of a twofold redemption, will be our condition in "the world to come"—and the like of that has never yet been in the creation of God. Neither angels in their dignity, nor Adam in his innocence, ever illustrated it.

One verse, I may just observe, in the Epistle to the Colossians, gives us to learn redemption by blood—one verse in the Epistle to the Philippians gives us to learn redemption by power—and one verse in the Epistle to the Ephesians combines the two. (Col. i. 20; Phil. iii. 21; Eph. i. 14.)

The story of the *purchase* which our Redeemer has made is given to us in the Gospels—the story of the *rescue* which our Redeemer will make, is given to us in the Apocalypse.* Accordingly it is simply as "the Lamb," we see Christ in the Gospels—it is as "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" as well as "the Lamb," we see Him in the Apocalypse. (John i. 29, 36; Rev. v. 5, 6.) For it is by His blood or sacrifice the Lord Jesus purchases us, or answers for us the claims of God

* At least, as far as the rescue of the *Inheritance* goes, from the fourth to the nineteenth chapter.

upon us; it will be by His arm stretched out in judgments, that He is to rescue our inheritance from the grasp and captivity of the Usurper, who now rules, as its god and prince, the course of this present evil world.

But I may say a little more as to this twofold character of redemption of which we are now speaking. It is intimated in the very first promise. (Gen. iii. 15.) There was an exhibition of it in the day of the Exodus—for Israel was then a *purchased* people, ransomed from the claims of God by the blood on the lintels, and also a *rescued* people, delivered from the enmity and strength of Pharaoh by the overthrow of Egypt in the Red Sea. (Ex. xii., xiv.) Then, we have, here and there, along the current of the Old Testament, types, prophecies, and rehearsals of this great mystery, the creation of God in a purchased or rescued condition, or in the enjoyment of this twofold redemption. After all this, the Lord Jesus is introduced to the world and to His own work and commission in it, in this character of a twofold Redeemer, as the prophecies which went before Him tell us. (See Luke i. ii.) And then, His ministry *in life* illustrated redemption by *power*, because He was blotting out the traces of the strength of the enemy in the healings and quickenings He wrought; and His ministry *in death* accomplished redemption by *blood*, because it paid the ransom for our deliverance from all the claims of God and of righteousness, which were against us.*

* There is an interval, surely, between the times of these two redemptions—as Eph. i. 14 distinctly tells us, and, as we know, must be.

But even had one grace and light to do it, time would fail to tell out all the glories of the great Redemption. It is gaining its victories still, and will be gaining them till the day of the Resurrection of the saints, and of the Kingdom that follows—and when all its victories have been wrought, its honours will be celebrated for ever.

THE BITTEN ISRAELITE.

NUMBERS XXI.

VERY happy it is to be discovering the glories of Scripture; specially in days when the infidel insolence of men is challenging it. Amalek, of old, dared to come out, and withstand the camp of Israel, though at that moment the Cloud which carried the Glory was resting on the camp—and, by-and-by, the great infidel confederacy of the last days will rise so high in pride and daring as to face the army of the white-horsed Rider descending from heaven. (Ex. xvii., Rev. xix.)

In like spirit is the heart of man now challenging the Book which carries the precious and mysterious glories of the Wisdom of God. It is therefore good service to draw forth these glories, and let the oracles of God speak, in their own excellency, for the confusion of this iniquity. And one of these glories, a part of this excellency, is this, that it is found to be one breath that animates, one light that shines, one voice that is heard, in all the regions of this one Divine volume. For, in a manner, Moses may be said to re-appear in Paul, Isaiah in Peter, David in John, and the like. The light of the morning is the light of noonday and of evening, though, it is true, in different measures and conditions.

In turning now to the narrative which this scripture gives us, we shall see this illustrated. We find, in the

first instance, that the Lord refuses to cancel the judgment He had pronounced. The Camp had sinned, and fiery serpents, messengers of death, were sent among them—and though Moses may pray and the people cry out in anguish of heart, the Lord will not remove those executioners of His righteous judgment. And this is His way in the Gospel. The sentence of death pronounced at the beginning on sin is not reversed. That could not be. That would be the acknowledging of some mistake or infirmity—and that could not be. But God has His provisions in the face of the sentenced death. This is His way. Wonderful to tell it, He provides the sinner with an answer to His own demands in righteousness! At the beginning this was so, and so has it been again and again; so is it in the Gospel, and so is it in this narrative.

God brought the bruised Seed of the Woman into the death-stricken garden of Eden, and Adam, the self-ruined sinner, is provided for. Noah got from God the Ark in the day of the Flood, and Israel the sprinkled lintel in the day of the judgment of Egypt. David was told to raise an altar in the despised threshing-floor of an uncircumcised Jebusite; and that altar there had virtue to quiet the sword of the Angel of death that was travelling on high over the doomed city. As the blood of Calvary had virtue to rend the vail from top to bottom, and open the high heavens to the captives of sin and death.

This is one of the beautiful unities in the revealed way of God.

It is not God cancelling His judgments, but providing the sinner with an answer to them. This little

narrative finely and vividly exhibits this. Israel had sinned, as we have seen, and fiery serpents were sent into the midst of them. They prayed that the serpents might be taken away; but no such prayer could prevail. The executioners of righteousness must remain in the camp—death must follow sin, for God had said at the beginning, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die.” But the Lord commands Moses to make a Serpent of brass and set it on a pole, and then proclaim, as in the hearing of the whole camp, that every bitten Israelite who looked to that uplifted Serpent, should be healed and live.

This was life confronting death—a secret spring of life and healing in the midst of the powers of death—it was as the revelation of the bruised Seed of the Woman in the freshly death-stricken garden of Eden. But this was not the withdrawing of the fiery serpents, as the camp had craved—it was not the cancelling of the sentence which had been passed upon their sin; it was another, a different, and a higher thing; it was enabling the Israelite in the wilderness to triumph over that miserable estate in which he had involved himself. This is what it was. It was not simply an escape from it, but a triumph over it—for an Israelite bitten by a fiery serpent, if he but looked at the brazen Serpent, might then smile at the fiery serpents though still abroad in the camp—just as Noah long before, on the vantage-ground where grace and salvation had put him, might have smiled at the waters as they were rising around him—or as the Israelite in Egypt, under the sprinkled lintel, might have smiled at the sword of the destroying Angel as he was passing through the land.

How excellent all this is! And this is still the Gospel—so consistent with itself is the way of God, and shadowed in like beauty in the story of Noah in the Flood, or of the Israelite in Egypt, or of the bitten man of the camp in the wilderness who had looked at the Serpent of brass. Such an one could not be bitten a second time; the sin against the Lord of the camp, which had quickened these ministers of death, had been met by the provisions of that same Lord of the camp Himself, and this was his security and his triumph. He was now in a better state than had he never been bitten. His state was then vulnerable, now it is impregnable—then he might have been wounded by the messenger of death, now he could not. As Adam clothed of God is beyond Adam in the nakedness of innocency; Adam the pardoned and accepted sinner, beyond Adam the upright creature.

God's riddle—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness"—is expounded again and again. We have seen it before, and we see it here again. And in connection with all this, giving another look at Adam, I may say, that when his lips were opened over the Woman the second time, they uttered a happier word than they had uttered the first time. "She shall be called Woman" did not express a joy equal to that which he tasted when, as we further read, "he called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." To celebrate life from God in the face of self-wrought death, is a far higher occupation for the heart, than to celebrate even the closing, crowning gift of God in creation or in providence.

Now all this which we have here traced in this little narrative in Numbers xxi., is, again I say, the Gospel. This is as the salvation of God. Nothing that was threatened has been cancelled. All by the process of ruin and redemption, is met and answered and satisfied. The blood of the everlasting covenant has given "the God of peace" to raise from the dead, Jesus, as "the Shepherd of the sheep." God Himself is righteously, gloriously justified, and the sinner victoriously brought into a condition of certainty and impregnableness, and of holy thankful defiance of all the enmity and the attempts and the resources of the old Destroyer.

But there is this further feature of the Gospel impressed on this little narrative. The life or healing was to be *individual*—the bitten Israelite must look himself to the uplifted Serpent. "*Every one* that is bitten, when he looketh upon it shall live," said the Lord to Moses—and then the history tells us, "If a serpent had bitten any man, when *he* beheld the Serpent of brass, *he* lived." (verses 8, 9.) So is it now as between us and God personally and individually in the Gospel—and we may deeply bless Him that it is so. He individualizes and separates us to Himself, to talk to us about our sins, and settle the question of eternity with us. He sits with us alone at the Well of Sychar, or sees us, our own very selves, under the fig-tree, or feels our own touch in the midst of the busy crowd, or looks up to the sycamore tree to catch our eye, or meets us alone outside the camp, or on the floor of the Temple. His word in John iii. is like His word in Numbers xxi. —"Except *a man* be born again, *he* cannot see the kingdom of God." A look will do it, but the look must

be a personal, individual act. Faith is the act of the soul in immediate dealing with God. Another cannot believe for me, nor can ordinances or human religious provisions take God's place in relation to me. I must look, and Christ must be lifted up. Blessed to tell it, He and I are to have to do with one another.

Thus is it, as reflected in this little narrative, and thus is it in the world-spread Gospel. And surely these are wondrous witnesses of the way the grace and salvation of God have taken with us. God did not prevent sin. Nor has He cancelled the judgment which He attached to it. Nor has He simply made things again as once they were. He gets out of the ruin something better than that which had been ruined—and He has accomplished this in a way of unsullied righteousness, and of infinite display of His own name and glory. It is redemption and resurrection, life in victory, life won by Himself from the power of death.

But I must more particularly meditate on the Lord Jesus in the Gospel by St. John, as in connection with this.

The moment recorded in our narrative was no time for anything but a look, and that too, a look at the uplifted Serpent. It would not have done for a bitten Israelite to occupy himself with any other object. Death was before him, if he did not look there. And it would have been the gracious service of any brother Israelite to have recalled him to that object, if he saw that his eye, or feared that his thoughts, were disposed to take up with any other.

It is such a part as this, which the Lord Himself acts

with Nicodemus in John iii. Nicodemus had come to Him as to a Teacher. The Lord at once turns him into another direction, and lets him know that he must come to Him as a Saviour or Life-giver. Nicodemus was seeking *instruction*. The Lord tells him that he needed *life*. And then, He 'so orders His speech with him as to withdraw him from every thought and every object but the Serpent of brass lifted on the pole in the wilderness. He lets him know, that he and all men, like bitten Israelites, were on their way to death, but that the brazen Serpent, the Healer or Life-giver, God's salvation, was in the camp again, and that the look must again be given, must interpose again as between the bite and death, or the kingdom would be lost, and the sinner would perish.

Indeed it is according to this, or in the spirit of One who was withdrawing the eye of every one who comes to Him from every object but the uplifted Serpent, that the Lord Jesus conducts His ministry all through that Gospel by St. John. For He refuses to act in any character but that of a Saviour. Men may come to Him in other relationships and for other ends, but He will not receive them. One may appeal to Him as a Doer of Wonders, another may flatter Him as a King, another may be for seating Him on a throne of judgment, another, like Nicodemus, may come to Him as a Revealer of the deep, mysterious lessons of heaven; but He has no welcome for such; He does not entertain approaches and appeals like these. He does not commit Himself to any or either of these. But when a convicted sinner comes to Him or stands before Him, when, in that way, a bitten Israelite looks to Him as

the uplifted Serpent, the God-appointed Healer or Quickener of man, then He answers at once, and life and salvation are imparted.

What consolation! What grace in Him, what deliverance and blessing for us! What joy to meet God in such a character, and to see Him thus, as the Jesus of St. John's Gospel, so jealously holding Himself before us in that character, refusing to be received in any other. His loved Nicodemus was under long and patient training, ere he gave Him the look of a bitten Israelite. But he did at the end, and then did it blessedly and vigorously. (See John xix.)

Precious truth indeed, and precious Saviour who has provided us sinners with it! The look that was preached so long ago, in the midst of the camp of Israel in the wilderness, in the day of this twenty-first of Numbers, the Lord Jesus, the Jehovah of Israel and the true Serpent of Brass, preaches it still and again, and with all fervency and earnestness, in the Gospel by St. John.

But again.—The Lord lets us further know in that same Gospel, how He welcomes that look when it is given Him, and how immediately He answers it with the healing and salvation of God. Mark this in the case of Andrew and his companion, and of Nathanael in the first chapter. See this welcome finely and heartily expressed in His most gracious dealings with the Samaritan in the fourth chapter; and again read it in His words to the woman in the eighth chapter; and listen to it in His words to Peter, in the sixth, when He turns to him, upon the multitude refusing to give Him that look. And we have another witness of the same in

chapter xii., when He speaks of Himself again as the uplifted Brazen Serpent, and exults in the thought of gathering all men to Himself in that character. (See verse 32.)

Now these are characteristics in the true ordinance which we could not have gotten in the typical ordinance of Numbers xxi. We do not there find an Israelite, in the sweet affection of the Jesus of St. John, earnestly and carefully guiding the eye of his bitten brother to the uplifted Serpent. That was an affectionate exercise of heart that was reserved for the Saviour Himself to practise and exhibit. Nor do we (for we could not) find the uplifted Serpent there welcoming and encouraging the eye that turned to it. But this also was reserved for the true, the living, the Divine Healer of sinners ruined by the old fiery serpent of death. In Him we get these things. And thus, in a great sense, the half is not told us by the type—the original exceeds the fame that we had heard of it. Happy those poor sinners, who stand before the Brazen Serpent who is now lifted up before their eyes in St. John's Gospel. They get the healing of God there, and a hearty welcome likewise.

We have, however, something more. We have this same earnestness and affection in the Holy Ghost as we have seen to be in the Son. We find it in the Epistle to the Galatians. How zealously is St. Paul there, in the Spirit, occupied in either keeping the eye of the Galatians on Christ crucified, or turning them back to that object! He would alarm them by the fear of some witchery. He would challenge and rebuke them, and that sharply. He would yearn over them, and fain

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consent to travail in birth with them again. He would, in deepest affection, remind them of past days of blessedness, and solemnly contrast them with the present. He reasons with them also. And he tells them his own story, and the purpose of his heart touching this great object, the crucified Christ of God, the true uplifted Serpent of Brass, how he had looked at it, and meant still to gaze, to live by the faith of it, and glory only in it.

All this is surely excellent. The Spirit in the Apostle is in company with the Son of the Evangelist—and the shadow is outdone by the substance. Affections are exercised in the Divine originals, which could never have been expressed in the typical ordinances.

Do we still discover a further secret, I may yet ask, when we compare this chapter in Numbers with St. John? Yes—the light that shines there, though the same light, is still brighter here. We discover this again in chapter iii.

There the Lord connects this look at the uplifted Serpent with the new birth. This had not been done in Numbers xxi.—though it might have been derived from it. The new, eternal life might have been discovered in the Israelite who had looked at that Serpent, because he was then breathing resurrection-life, which is eternal life. He was enjoying a life which had been provided for him by One who had met, in his behalf, the wounding of the old serpent, the serpent who had the power of death. When he looked, he lived; and that life was a life won from death, a victorious life. In principle it was eternal life, such as the healing power of God, the salvation of God, the risen, victorious

Son breathes into the elect. I say not, that every Israelite who looked was introduced to this eternal life. It is not necessary to say that; but it is the expression of it—and this, in its substance and reality we get in John iii., and are instructed by the Lord Himself to know that faith's look at the true Brazen Serpent carries eternal life with it. "And as Moses lifted up the Serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

And this truth is taught distinctly in 1 Peter i. "Being born again," says the inspired Apostle, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." And then he further teaches us where this word is to be found, where this seed of eternal life is to be picked up—"and this is the word which *by the Gospel* is preached unto you"—the Gospel being, as we know, the publication of the virtue of the true Serpent of Brass, the Lamb of God, the Healer of sinners destroyed by the lie of the old serpent of death.

RICH IN GOD.

It is well for us to acquaint ourselves with the many and deep and wondrous interests we have in God—as, for instance, in His *affections*, His *counsels*, and His *doings*. These things are taught and illustrated in Scripture.

Divine affections, Divine counsels, Divine doings, make us their object. Blessed to tell it. God's eternity that is past took knowledge of us, having been then chosen, predestinated, and written in the Book of Life. Time, in God's hand, in all its stages or successions, has concerned itself with us. God's eternity that is to come will owe much of its joy and glory to our history, to that which has been done, in abounding grace, for the redemption of us sinners.

Having chosen us ere the world was, He has been training us in the wisdom of His ways in all the ages of the world; and when the world is rolled up like a scroll, we shall still be an object. Heaven acquaints itself with our history—angels gather fresh light and joy from it; and the moral or result of it will be, the revelation and full display of the glory of God in all His manifold and infinite perfections for ever. What interests in God are these!

His *righteousness* is ours—as His *love* is ours. We are made “the righteousness of God,” and with the love wherewith Christ is loved, we are loved.

People speak of their large and varied interests, their properties here and there; and they range in thought over these wealthy places, marking them well, and pleasing themselves with the clearness and sureness of their title to them. But do we survey in like delight, our possessions in God, as we have said—such as, in His affections; His counsels; His eternity, whether past or to come; in time as now under His hand and ordering; in His righteousness; in His works for us and His operations within us through His Son and by His Spirit; in the sufferings He has accomplished, and the glories He has won. What riches! What a blessed truth this is for the soul to seize upon!

The Epistle to the Romans, and to the Ephesians, among others, show us largely our interests in Divine *counsels*—John's Epistle shows us our interests in Divine *affections*. All Scripture tells us how God has been ministering to us in all His arrangements in the successive journeys that *time* has run, and the place we have already had, or shall have, in His *eternity*. And the Gospel preaches to us our interests in His *sufferings*, His *glories*, His *righteousness*, and the *operations of His Spirit*.

We get illustrations, as we get direct teaching, of these things. I would mark something of this, as we see it in Zechariah iii. and Luke xv.—in the prophetic parable of Joshua the High Priest, and in the Lord's parable of the Prodigal Son. There is kindredness in these parables, and yet characteristic difference in each.

Joshua represents us as having our interests in Divine *counsels*; the Prodigal, in Divine *affections*—though both of them are seen in the presence of a

friend and of an accuser, as also going through the process that changes them from degradation to honour and joy.

But in Joshua we see no personal exercise. There is nothing shown us of a work of the power of God in him. Nor is there told us of any of the outgoings of the heart of the Father towards him. He is simply the object of election, and of the work of the grace of God for him and in his behalf, (and that to a bright and marvellous degree,) while he himself has only to be passive, letting the Lord do for him and with him as seemeth Him good.

In the Prodigal, we see the work of the Spirit, the hidden, effectual virtue of the operation of God visiting and moving his soul, and turning him home, where a welcome awaits him under every form that the dearest and most thorough affection could suggest.

Indeed I might notice the narrative in John viii., in company with these parables—for there, the convicted one is in the presence of both an accuser and a friend, and is carried from the place of shame and danger to one of liberty and safety. But she is not declared to have been the object of counsels, nor is she shown as the object of affection; but the way of Christ in the Gospel is finely illustrated. Who is “blind” and “deaf” like the Lord on this occasion?—thus taking His place in the service of the grace of God to sinners, not imputing to men their trespasses. (See Isa. xlii. 19; 2 Cor. v. 19.) These are illustrations of things taught us—our many and various interests in God. Divine counsels, Divine affections, Divine works and operations, make us their object. We are “rich in God.”

Each one of the saints of God shares *all* these—but it is, thus, the way of Divine wisdom to illustrate the different parts of this our inheritance in God in different portions of His Word.

The saints will be rich in *circumstances* by-and-by, as now they are rich in *God Himself*. The kingdom will be established, “the world to come” will shine in its glories, and the saints shall be there. And the saints ought now to be rich *towards* God, as they are rich *in* Him, laying out their energies and their advantages, their talents, whatever such be, in His service—as Luke xii. 21 speaks.

GLORIES.

THERE will be a scene of glories when the Kingdom comes. We commonly speak of "glory" as if it stood in that connection only. But this is wrong. Glory then will be displayed, it is true; glory will then be in the circumstances of the scene. But a much more wonderful form of glory is known already—and that is, in the Gospel. There God Himself is displayed; a more wondrous object than all circumstances. The glory of the Gospel is *moral*, I grant, not material or circumstantial. But it is glory of the profoundest character. There, again I say, God Himself is displayed. The just God and yet the Saviour is seen there. Righteousness and peace shine there in each other's company—a result which none but God Himself, and in the way of the Cross, could ever have reached.

The Gospel calls on sinners to breathe the atmosphere, as I may say, of salvation, to have communion with God in love, and to maintain it in liberty and assurance—and there is a glory in such thoughts and truths as these which indeed excelleth.

Satan interfered or meddled with the work of God, and ruined it in its creature-condition. God at once interfered or meddled with Satan's work, and eternally overthrew it, bringing meat out of the eater, and sweetness out of the strong.

The three earliest receivers of God's Gospel, Adam, Eve, and Abel, strikingly illustrate souls that apprehended the glory of the Gospel in different features of it.

Adam was blessedly, wondrously emboldened by it, so that at the bidding of it, he came forth at once from his guilty covert and entered the presence of God again, naked as he was. And his boldness was warranted, for he was welcomed there. Eve exulted in it. She sang over it. "I have gotten a man from the Lord," said she—in the joy of the promise that had been made her touching her Seed.

Abel offered the "fat" with the victim. He entered with happiest, brightest intelligence into the promise, and saw that the Giver of it would find His own blessed delight in it—that the Gospel, while it saved the sinner, was the joy as well as the glory of God. The fat on the altar expressed this.

And such apprehensions of Christ as these—the faith that gives boldness—the faith that inspires with joy—the faith that penetrates the Cross—is full of power in the soul.

R U T H .

THE ways of grace and of faith, and the warrant on which they each act, get very beautiful illustrations in this little book.

Faith has two special characteristics—and so has grace. Faith *overcomes the world*, and *returns fully and intimately to God*. Or, in language known in Scripture, it takes a place “outside the camp,” and “within the veil.”

Grace *encourages the soul*, (inspiring confidence,) and then *answers it*. These are two of its shining ways; and they get an expression here in the dealings of Boaz with Ruth; as faith illustrates its two properties, (of which I have spoken above,) in the actings of Ruth.

Ruth, at the beginning, casts in her lot with Naomi in the hour of her widowhood, her strangership, and her poverty. For Naomi's sake, she will, like a daughter of Abraham, leave country, kindred, and father's house; and all that may be said to daunt her avails nothing. Go she will across the unknown world, and Israel's people shall be her people, and their God shall be her God. And this was faith that takes its place outside the camp, or gains victories over the world.

But faith that leaves the world, returns to God. And so in Ruth. The great things of Boaz are not

too great for her. As far as estate or condition in life went, she was as distant from him as she well could be, a gleaner in his field behind his reapers, not fit to be put among his handmaids. But she aims at himself. It is not a small measure that she seeks, but the very highest and richest. The gleaner would be the wife. And this is also the way of faith. It goes outside the camp, but it comes within the vail. It leaves the world, but it returns to the full presence of God; thus taking the very opposite place to that in which the Fall has set man. By the Fall, man is estranged from God, and finds his place in the world. We see this in Cain. He went out from the presence of the Lord; but there he built a city, and filled it with all manner of profit and of pleasure, with pastime and with traffic. Faith returns by the same road, making the opposite journey. It takes leave of the world, and gets fully and intimately and for ever back to God. And this way and power of faith are shown in Ruth first joining herself with the poverty of Naomi, and then getting for herself the wealth and dignity of Boaz.

And grace has its greatness and excellency in its way and generation, as surely as faith. It first *encourages*, as I said, inspiring confidence; and then it *rewards the confidence it has awakened*.

What was the Lord doing with Gideon in Judges vi.? What was He doing with Moses in Exodus iii.? What was He doing with Jeremiah, when first calling him into his office? (See chap. i.) He found slow, reluctant hearts there; but He got them ready for the blessing which His grace had prepared for them. And what in the days of His ministry was the way of the Lord Jesus,

but this of the God of Moses, Gideon, and Jeremiah? How did He sit at the well of Sychar, inviting the confidence of a poor distant Samaritan. How did He again and again rebuke that "little faith" which did not know and could not tell, whether it might look to Him for good or not. And how did He at once knock off from the poor leper's heart the one doubt that hung there, oppressing it and clouding it.

And this is also the way of the Spirit in the Apostles. How much of the teaching of the epistles, how much of the energy of the Spirit there is occupied in strengthening the faith and encouraging the hearts of the saints. Arguments of Divine persuasiveness, rebukes of fine earnest temper, and yearnings of love, are all employed to knit the feeble heart with the grace and Gospel of God.

And Boaz is made to express this. The delicacy and yet the sincerity with which he encourages Ruth in the second chapter, is beautiful to admiration. And then he is ready to answer all the demands which the confidence he had thus awakened makes upon him. He had not trained her heart for disappointment. As the Lord's hand is ready to fill the hand of the sinner which His Spirit has already opened to receive from Him.

And here I might say, it was a blessed moment in the soul of Naomi, when she awakened to the recollection, or to the knowledge of this simple fact, that Boaz was a kinsman. (ii. 20.) "Blessed," she says, "be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead." It was as when a soul is brought to the discovery not only of the grace that is in

God; but of a sinner's title to that grace, because of Jesus the Kinsman.

And thus, on the discovery of this blessed fact, Naomi, at once, charges Ruth to abide fast by his maidens, and not to be found in any other field. For this is the way of faith on the full discovery of Christ. It takes a long farewell, a farewell for ever, of all other confidences.

Boaz was a kinsman—and a kinsman has his duties and obligations, according to the laws and ordinances of Israel. Naomi knew this, and she instructs Ruth, the stranger, in these choice and wondrous secrets. And she is bold, and emboldens Ruth. And faith is so still. It counts on the *greatest* things—pardon, acceptance, adoption, inheritance, glory. But though bold, it is warranted. The customs and ordinances of the place to which faith is introduced, the counsels of the God of Israel, the secrets of abounding grace, are faith's warrant. It aims high; but its aim is guided by the Spirit of God; for God has, of old, counselled these high things for faith.

And when Ruth has followed Naomi's word, and laid herself at the Kinsman's feet, and claimed him for a lord and a husband, on her returning to Naomi, Naomi, in beautiful language, says to her, "Who art thou, my daughter?" (iii. 16.) Perfectly beautiful that is. Naomi looked on Ruth as the elect Bride. She knew what the faithful Kinsman would make her. She shone in her full dignity and joy, in Naomi's eye, at that moment—just as we should survey ourselves in like power of faith, and say, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we

know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

What follows is the experience of a soul, when the Kinsman is discovered by faith.

The grace of the Kinsman is a great sight to see to likewise. There were hindrances in the way. A nearer kinsman had his claims, and Boaz has to own them and answer them. Just, as in the great original, sin withstands the purposes of love—the guilt of man stands in the way of his blessing from One who is holy, as He is gracious. But He has found a way to vindicate righteousness, and set aside sin, while He gratifies His own love, and answers all the claims which faith makes upon grace.

Boaz goes to "the gate," the place of judgment, and there meets "the elders," who were the guardians and vindicators of righteousness. And there, in their presence, and to their full satisfaction, he sets aside the nearer kinsman, and thus gets out of the way the hindrance that stood in the way to his taking Ruth and all her burthens upon himself. Faith had counted on this, that "the man would not be at rest till he had finished the thing," (iii. 18;) and so it came to pass. Boaz settles the whole affair, Ruth has but to "sit still," as Naomi had instructed her, and her Kinsman is faithful and her Redeemer is mighty.

A Kinsman in Israel was one that did not, as Naomi had told Ruth, forget his kindness to the dead or to the living. (ii. 20.) Nay, to the poor and to the oppressed, we may add. He was to ransom the inheritance, the sold inheritance, of his poor brother—he was to avenge the blood of his murdered brother—he was to raise up the

name of his dead and childless brother. Beautiful services, showing forth grace in its riches, its depth and its variety. And Boaz is made to represent this.

He acted, in taking Ruth and blessing her with the richest blessing he could bestow, on the warrant of the laws of Israel. He was acting righteously while bountifully—honoring the claims of the throne of judgment, when taking a gleaner from the field to seat her at his side. Beautiful shadow of One who is *Just* while a *Justifier*.

Faith may aim high, and count on great things, but the grace of God, and the counsels of God, and the law of the Kinsman, and the faithfulness of the Redeemer, warrant it all. Faith's boldness will not exceed faith's title. The heart that encourages itself in God shall be blest—blessed to say it!

And *grace* has as clear a warrant to gratify itself, as *faith* has to encourage itself. The Cross has been, so to speak, erected "at the gate," or in the place of judgment. God is never more holy than when forgiving sin upon the warrant of the Cross of Christ. There God's glory in the highest is again proclaimed, as is peace on earth. His righteousness is there set forth, as brightly as His love. It is *enthroned* mercy we lean upon—a Mercy-Seat upon the Ark of the Covenant, where the tables of testimony are found. If the blood of sprinkling be there, the kept and honored and magnified law is there also. God's righteousness is declared there, that "He might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) It is glory to God in the highest, while it is peace on earth, good will to men, which will still be sung by every soul that learns

the mystery and the fruit of the mission of the Son from the bosom of the Father to a world of sinners.

And one further beautiful point in the instructions of Naomi to Ruth I would still notice.

She tells her, in the earlier stage, while she was still a suitor, to wash herself, to anoint her, to put her raiment upon her, and then to get her down to the floor, where Boaz was to be. But as soon as Boaz has accepted her, then Naomi changes her voice, and tells her to sit still. (iii. 3, 18.)

So is it in the journey of the soul. We are occupied with ourselves at the first. We have many thoughts as of our uncleanness and nakedness, our condition as sinners convicted and in our shame—but when we get to know the great secret of grace, that our Redeemer is making our cause His own, then silence, stillness, abstraction from self and occupation only with Christ, becomes us. We have then to stand by and see the salvation of God. We have then, like Joshua in Zechariah iii., to be silent, while the Lord is doing His business with us and for us. We have to let Him answer our accusers and not open our own lips, like the Woman in John viii. We may, beforehand or while on the road, like the Prodigal, be thinking of ourselves, but as soon as the house is entered, and we see that the Father has made our blessing His care, then like the Prodigal again, we have only to sit and eat.

And let me further say, Naomi standing between Boaz and Ruth, the witness of Boaz to Ruth, is as Scripture between God and us. It witnesses God to us. It even pledges Him—and the business of faith is,

to listen, to receive, and to enjoy with confidence. So did Ruth. The modest gleaner becomes the assured, and if you please, bold suitor, under the word of Naomi. It was enough for Ruth, quite enough, that Naomi had instructed her. She asked no more, nor did she hesitate.

And very blessed to add, Naomi's word was enough for Boaz, as it had been for Ruth. Whatever Naomi had pledged for Boaz to the gleaner, Boaz made good to her. It was enough for Boaz that Naomi had pledged him. And so, blessed to tell it, it is enough that Scripture has spoken, and made promises in the name of the Lord to sinners. All shall be made good. Not a jot shall fail. Heaven and earth shall pass away, ere that could be. Jesus was fulfilling Scripture all through His ministry here, and He will not rest till He have finished it all, in all its rich and wondrous pledges of grace and glory.

THE ALTAR AT BETHEL.

1 KINGS XII. 25—XIII.

THE inspired commentary on Idolatry, which we find in Romans i., teaches us to know that it had its source in the corruption of the human mind. The haughtiness of the intellect became the parent of it. (verses 22–25.) The Apostle tells us also, that the “heart of unbelief” is an “evil” one. (Heb. iii. 12.) And at the opening of this scripture, we find that it was the love of the world that erected the idolatrous altar at Bethel. Jeroboam thought it was the only way by which he could secure the kingdom.

He corrupted the religion of the people. He did not, in infidel scorn, deny it—because he owned that God’s people had been brought out of Egypt—but he corrupted it—as guilty a thing; for it was turning it to his own account, or making it serve his own ends.

We learn, at the opening of chapter xiii., how the Lord deals with this corruption. It is according to His usual method. He sends His servant, under a fresh communication of His mind, and a fresh anointing of His Spirit, from the land of Judah, to the altar at Bethel, to denounce it, to deliver the judgment of God against all who had connected themselves with it; with a stay of the execution of that judgment until the time of Josiah the future King of the house of David. But

He also gives a present pledge of such execution—for the altar was rent at the moment, and the ashes that were upon it were poured out.*

This is His common way. He pronounces judgment, but delays the execution of it, giving present pledges of it. The interval is called "His long-suffering"—and we know it is "salvation," a time for gathering and quickening. (2 Pet. iii. 15.) Enoch pronounced the judgment of the ungodly, and we know from Jude that that judgment is still to be executed—but the Flood was as a pledge-fulfilment. The Lord pronounced the judgment of Jerusalem in Matthew xxiv., and we know, from the very terms of that sentence, that it is still to be executed—but the Roman invasion was as a pledge-fulfilment of it.

Jeroboam was indignant at the man of God who had pronounced this sentence against his altar, and he stretched out his arm, as commanding his servants to lay hold on him. But the hand of God laid hold on him, and his outstretched arm became rigid and withered. Then his mind is changed—he repents himself—to be sure he does—he is gracious when pangs come upon him—and he sues the man of God to pray for the restoration of his arm. This is done; and he invites the man of God to come home with him to his palace for refreshment and rewards. But he lets the king know, in the spirit of a Daniel, that he may keep his gifts to himself and give his rewards to another.

* The judgment here pronounced was executed to the very letter. (2 Kings xxiii.) Josiah was prophesied of by name, as Cyrus afterwards was. (Isa. xlv.)

He leaves the scene of God's curse, and sets himself on the way back to Judah, having done the business committed to him by "the word of the Lord." The altar and its priests are left to meet the judgment of God in its season.

Now, however, and from hence to the end, the scene changes. We have no further sight of the man of God and of the King together, but we are to see the man of God in company with an old prophet who at that time lived at Bethel.

We are exposed to special temptations, if we live on border-lands, or in equivocal circumstances and conditions.

The old prophet, saint of God as he was, lived (something in the way of a Lot in Sodom) near the altar. The devil uses him; and with a lie in his mouth, that he was bidden by an angel to do so, he brings the man of God back from the road that was leading him down to Judah, to eat and drink with him in his house at Bethel.

The man of God was not on the Apostle's elevation, or in the Apostle's strength. He could and would stand for the word of the Lord in the face of all pretensions or assumptions. He would pronounce anathema upon even an angel himself, if he dared to gainsay that word which he had received from God. He cared not who it was, so to speak, come he from earth, hell, or heaven. He would hold by the word of God in the face of them all (Gal. i., ii.)—just as he could turn his back upon Jerusalem, and rebuke the chief of the Apostles, even Peter, and withstand him before all.

But this man of God was not in this vigour of Paul. He surrendered the word which he had received from God, to the word, as he judged it to be, of an angel; and he goes back to eat and drink in the place of which the Lord had said to him, "Thou shalt eat no bread, nor drink water there."

And here, another Divine principle gets a very striking illustration.

God is judging according to every one's work. (1 Pet. i. 17.) That is, He is disciplining His people *now*. Judgment at the house of God has *begun*. (1 Pet. iv. 17.) And so is it here. The judgment on Jeroboam and his priests is delayed; the judgment of this man of God shall be immediate. He shall now be judged of the Lord, that he may not be condemned with the world or Jeroboam by-and-by. (See 2 Kings xxiii., 17, 18.) The word alights upon him, falls in judgment on him, as he sits at the table of the old Prophet, eating and drinking—for he was eating and drinking condemnation of himself. And shortly after, as he resumes his journey home to Judah, and is on the road thither, a lion meets him and slays him.

How very arresting of our thoughts, and full of solemn meaning, all this is! The judgment of the world is stayed; the discipline of the saints is proceeding. So is it here. Yea, and more. There was a present pledge of the future judgment of the world, and there shall be now a present pledge of the future salvation of the saint. The altar was rent, as we saw, and the ashes poured out—and so now, the lion is not allowed to touch the carcass of the man of God, nor lay his deadly paw upon the ass that had carried him. His

body is reserved for final honour, though his life was a present forfeit to the righteous judgment or holy discipline of God.

It would have been the nature of the lion to kill the ass as well as its rider, and to devour the carcass—but he acted as much under Divine commission, in the death of the man of God, as the man of God himself had acted, when he pronounced judgment on the altar.

What varied and instructive illustrations of truth all these things are!

And the old Prophet, too, is to be again before us.—There was in him that which was of God, as well as that which was of nature or the flesh. But he was now old, and grey hairs are sadly numerous upon this Ephraim, as the Prophet speaks. He had lived carelessly as a saint. He had taken up his dwelling in an unclean place. He was too much like an old professor that needed reviving virtue. Satan uses him (as we have seen, but sad to tell it,) to corrupt his younger brother, a freshly-anointed vessel of the Spirit. But still, he seems to have been a “righteous man,” like Lot, though living in a Sodom. His lamentation over the man of God was genuine, and as that of one saint over another—genuine as the lamentation of David over Jonathan. It was the sorrow of a saint of God. And he charges his sons when he should die, to bury him in the same sepulchre where he was now religiously laying the remains of him whom he calls his “brother,” the man of God.

All this bespeaks the better nature in him. And when the Lord comes to execute by Josiah the judgment He had now pronounced by the man of God;

when the power of His hand comes to make good the declarations of His Spirit, and the day of the world's doom arrives, this Jeroboam-world of which we are speaking, the hand of God respects the old Prophet as it does the man of God. Josiah saves the sepulchre of these men, and preserves the bones of each of them from the common penal burning under which he was putting all others found in that unclean place around the altar at Bethel—as we read so fully and strikingly in 2 Kings xxiii.

It is thus; and all this reads us a lesson of very various moral instruction. We see the way of God in the judgment of the world, and in the discipline of His saint. We see the danger of living near Sodom. And we learn afresh that God's word must be clung to in the face all, and of everything.

THE SHUNAMITE.

2 KINGS IV.

In the Old Testament times we find the Lord bringing out fresh resources on repeated failures, and faith ever ready to adopt them, nay, and at times to calculate upon them and to look for them. Failure of everything under man's hand, or as in his stewardship, is witnessed again and again, but God's resources are unexhausted, and faith is undismayed and undistracted.

When Israel in the wilderness make the Golden Calf, and thus break the very first article of the Covenant under which all was then set, Moses acts as one that counted on finding something in God to meet the catastrophe. (Ex. xxxiii.)

When the nation, brought into the land under Joshua, again break the Covenant, as they do oftentimes, the Lord, in the energy of His Spirit, calls forth the Judges for their deliverance, and faith in them is ready for the occasion.

When the Priesthood ruined itself afterwards, and Ichabod was written on the forehead of Israel, God has a Prophet (a new and strange provision) in the secret place of His counsel and resources, and Samuel, as such, in faith leads on to Ebenezer, or God's help, for this fallen people.

When the Kingdom, in time, ruins itself, as the

people in the wilderness had done, and as the nation under the Judges had done, and the throne and house of David are in the dust, and Israel a captive, faith still waits in the certainty that God had not failed, though all beside had. The Temple may be a desolation, the Ark may have disappeared, all that was sacred have been lost, the land itself the property of the uncircumcised, and the people of God the slaves of the Gentile—still a Daniel, a Nehemiah, and an Esther, and other kindred hearts, can maintain their Nazaritism, and look for days of fresh discoveries of what God is and has for Israel.

God's resources are thus unexhausted by man's failures, and faith undistracted.

But in the present New Testament days, we have somewhat of another thing to mark—and it is this—the full satisfaction that faith takes in what God has already provided it with, and the jealousy and care of the Spirit, that we use that, and hold by it, in the perfect satisfaction of its being equal to all new and rising exigencies.

The difference is, therefore, this—in other days, faith calculated on what it was still to get; in these present days, it is faithful to, and abides by, that which it has already got. For it has got Christ, the end of all Divine provisions.

We have only to read the Epistles to perceive this. Christ, the Christ of God, and Scripture, the word of His grace, become our standing provision. How does the Spirit there, keep all the boast of the heart in that which is thus already with us! And surely faith takes up the mind of the Spirit. How do the Epistles speak

of Christ as being all to us, exhorting us to go on with Him as we have begun with Him, to be built up in Him as we have been rooted in Him, to hold fast, to continue in the things we have learnt already, and to be still refusing all but Christ and the Word. "I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace," is Apostolic language.

Here is a difference. But there is kindredness in past and present, Old Testament and New Testament days, in this; that failure on man's part and consequent confusion in the scene around us, have alike given character to both. And faith is the same, knowing and using God's resources in the face of the confusion; only, again I say, with this difference, that the resource, in past, Old Testament days, was something *new*; now, it is *ever one and the same*; that is, God and the word of His grace, Christ and Scripture.

Of old, faith acted in *that* way, now faith acts in *this* way.

When, of old, as we have seen, the Golden Calf was made, faith looked for a new revelation of God's Name. When the nation in the land forfeited their place under the wing of Jehovah, faith found its object in the freshly-awakened Judge or Deliverer. When the priesthood was defiled, faith used the Prophet. When the kingdom was a ruin, faith still waited in hope of sure and certain sovereign relief in new ways suited to new conditions—as Mordecai at such a time said, "Enlargement and deliverance shall arise to the Jews from another place." But now, in the face of failure and confusion, take it what form it may, faith has God and His Word, Christ and Scripture, standing and abiding re-

sources known alike at every moment of New Testament times, nothing fresh, nothing new, but that which is given in grace faith uses, and remains calm and undistracted, however grieved and humbled. For "the ends of the world" are come upon us. (1 Cor. x. 11.) We look not for further exhibitions, but we use what we have, let Church ruins and Christendom confusion be what they may. Faith holds the beginning of its confidence steadfast unto the end. Faith is prepared for failure in God's Stewards; but having reached Himself, rests at ease and is satisfied.

The Shunamite, in 2 Kings iv., illustrates these beautiful ways of faith, and does so beautifully. She was not dismayed or distracted by a day of failure and confusion; she is prepared for such under man's hand; but having apprehended and reached God and His resources, she is satisfied, and abides there.

This finely shows itself in her history. At the beginning of it, she *apprehends* Elisha justly. Without introduction she perceives him to be "a man of God," and as such she welcomes and entertains him. She can count on God having His resources at command, though the kingdom be reprobate. And this she does in the due manner. She knows his *character* as well as his *person*. If he be a man of God, she will trust him as having the tastes and sympathies of such, and as such she prepares for him. A little chamber on the wall, and then the necessary furniture, a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick. Not to display the treasures of her house, but to meet him in character, is her thought; and this is *communion*. Her

instincts are fine, as her faith is strong and intelligent.

The scenery was heavenly. I mean, all about that chamber bespoke heavenly strangers on the earth in the days of corruption and apostasy. Things were then in utter moral ruin. Ahab's family, the house of Omri, was on the throne, and nothing in the kingdom then was worthy of God. Little things do, and alone do, for God's people then. In Solomon-days it shall be otherwise. Now, a bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, is enough—then, servants and their apparel and their sitting, with all beside, shall set out earthly, worldly greatness.

All this is full of beauty and of meaning. This dear woman apprehends God's witness in this evil day. She knows that God is true, though every man a liar. She knows that if foundations be destroyed, God is still in His holy temple. In this evil day, she sees God's resources in this vessel. He is a stranger, a lonely man, a kind of Jonah in Nineveh, un-introduced, un-accredited. But she apprehends him—and having accepted him, she holds fast by him. The husband may talk of new moons and sabbaths; Elisha himself may talk of the servant and the staff—but with her, God's vessel is everything. He had been the beginning of her confidence, and she will have him as such steadfast to the end.

For faith, in those days as well as in these days, held to God's resources. Faith looked again and again, as I have said, for new resources, as new exigencies sprang forth; but while these resources were in God's hand for

His people, until they had given place, through fresh corruption, to new ones, faith clung to them. So, this Shunamite to the Prophet, when all in the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes, whether on the Throne or in the Sanctuary, was in ruins.

2 CHRONICLES VI., 1, 2.

It was no common moment in the experience of a man of God, when Solomon uttered these words, "The Lord hath said that He would dwell in the thick darkness; but I have built an house of habitation for Thee, and a place for Thy dwelling for ever."

A wondrous thought it was, that anything done or erected on the face of this defiled earth, in the midst of this revolted world, should solicit the God of glory forth from that distance into which sin had forced Him, as I may express it. For sin had estranged Him from this scene of His creation. Immeasurable distance, impenetrable darkness, lay between Him and the world that had rebelled—and wondrous, surely, was the thought, the consciousness of this, that He had been brought back to have His tabernacle with man again.

But so it is; and so the spirit of Solomon was given to taste it and know it on this great occasion.

It was a passing, a momentary anticipation of *the Kingdom*. Solomon was then in the combined glories of King and Priest. He was as a priest upon the throne. The ordinary priests had been set aside, and he, as the royal Priest, was about to bless the people, and worship the Lord, as in the days of the Kingdom that is still before us.

For so will it be then. The tabernacle of God will

be with men, and He will dwell with them. The Glory will then be returned to the earth.

But this coming forth from the thick darkness, or the infinite distance, to which sin had separated God, is known in another way. In *spirit*, we are called to walk in the full, cloudless light of the Divine presence now—in *circumstances*, we shall do so, in the Kingdom by-and-by.

He is now brought back from this distance, or out of the darkness into which sin had forced Him, by the Gospel, which is His own provision for a sinner. And our faith in that provision brings Him back. His grace has thrown up a highway whereby He can come to us—and when faith uses that way, He comes very near to us, finds His place, His habitation, His home with us again. “We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” (1 John iv. 16.)

But there is another darkness in which God still dwells. I mean that which broods or settles over the whole scene around us of circumstances or of providence. In that place, God works unseen; at least, commonly so. In that place He says, as I may express it, “What I do thou knowest not now”—and we must still walk by faith, where God still dwells in darkness. We shall know hereafter. We shall see face to face then, though now it be but darkly. “God is His own interpreter, and He will make it plain.” And as faith in His provisions of grace in Christ now draws Him forth from the distant darkness in which He had righ-

teously hid Himself away from sinners, so by-and-by, the Glory will bring Him forth from the darkness in which He now orders providence for His saints. "There shall be no night there;" as now in *spirit*, though not in *circumstances*, we say, "The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth." (1 John ii. 8; Rev. xxii. 5.)

NEHEMIAH VIII.

THIS chapter both teaches and illustrates a truth which pervades the Book of God, and on which our salvation depends—that grace prevails; the work of God, through the blood of Christ, over the work of Satan, sin, and death; the Gospel of peace over all the terrors and accusations of the conscience.

It was thus in the story and in the experience of *Adam*. He ruined himself, and retreated from the presence of God, a sinner; but the voice of mercy, revealing the mystery of the bruised and bruising Seed of the Woman, followed him into his guilty distance, and drew him back to God in peace and assurance.

The end of all flesh again came before God in the day of *Noah*. But the ark which God had prescribed, and which faith had adopted, rode above the water-floods.

Judgment entered *the land of Egypt*, having title against every house there, the Israelite's as well as the Egyptian's. But the blood on the lintel, which grace had prescribed and which faith had used, sheltered the house which had thus been let into the secret of God.

The thunders of Sinai made all the host to tremble. Even *Moses* could not stand before them. He quakes and fears exceedingly. He can no more stand there, than the feeblest Israelite. But he is taken above the

place of the thunders, to the place where Christ is revealed to him in the shadows of good things to come, and there he is with unvailed face.

After this, judgment enters *Canaan*, as it had afore entered Egypt. But grace again prescribed what faith again used; the scarlet line was now hung out, as the blood had then been sprinkled, and judgment passed by.

It was after this same pattern, in some sort, all through the times of Israel; for during that age, Mosaic or legal or conditional as it was, there were ordinances that bespoke the old truth, the truth that had been taught from the beginning. The Temple set aside the Sabbath then; that is, the Priest did the business of the Temple on the Sabbath-day; in other words, the service of grace prevailed over the demands of law. (Matt. xii.)

In due season, the Gospel comes forth to reveal this great, this earliest truth in *all its glory*. For this is the Gospel in the blood of Jesus. "Grace triumphant reigns." It reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

This beautiful eighth of Nehemiah has a vivid illustration of this same truth, which thus, as we see, pervades, and I may add, necessarily pervades, the Book of God.

The Law was read, in the presence of the congregation of Israel at Jerusalem, on the first day of the seventh month. That day was the mystic or typical day of revival, the day of the Blowing of Trumpets, and of the new Moon. (See Lev. xxiii.; Ps. lxxxi.)

The people, listening to the Law on such a day as this, are commanded by those who then sat in Moses' seat, to let their minds be formed by *the day*, and not by *the law*. That is, they were told not to mourn, but to be merry. Very right that they should mourn, if they heard the law alone, but hearing it on such a day as the first day of the seventh month, they heard it as in the presence of the grace and quickening and salvation of God, and their place and duty is to have their souls formed by grace. Right, again I say, it is, nay needful, that we should be broken-hearted in the sense of our sin and of our ruin, and under the hearing of the law; but when the healing of God visits us, we are to learn the joy that healing imparts, and have our minds framed accordingly. If the *law* and the *first day of the seventh month* come together, as here—if the *service of the Temple*, and the *Sabbath* are in collision—the claim of the law must give place to that of that mystic day, and the Sabbath yield to the Temple—as we learn from Matthew xii. 5.

We may *remember* our condition as sinners, but we are to *enjoy* our condition as saved. (Eph. ii., 11–18.)

Booths were made in the Feast of Tabernacles. But they were only remembrancers, in order to enhance the present joy of the Tribes of the Lord, in the cities and villages and land of their possession, telling them, as such booths did, that they had once traversed a wilderness. So again, in the ordinance of the basket of first-fruits. That his father had been a Syrian ready to perish was, on the occasion of that ordinance, to be remembered by the Israelite; but his well-filled basket was at that moment in his hand and under his eye, that

he might worship in the sense of a present goodly inheritance. See Lev. xxiii., 33-43; Deut. xxvi., 1-11.

And so here, in this beautiful chapter. The law rightly caused the people to mourn—but, the day on which it was now read to them being the first day of the seventh month, mourning under the law must give place to joy. Yea, and more than that. It must now form the mind and character of the people.

And blessed it is to see *grace forming character*. (See Titus ii., 11-14.) We may see it doing so in each of the cases I have noticed.

What, let me ask formed Adam's character, as we see him and his company in Genesis iv.? It was the redemption he had learnt. He is there seen as a Stranger on the earth, and a Worshipper of God.

What formed Noah's character in the ark? The deliverance he was then proving. We do not find him, in the spirit of fear, with an uneasy mind handling the gopher-boards of his house, to prove whether they were keeping the waters out; but we see him opening the windows, to take a look out, in expectation of the new world.

What formed Israel's character in the paschal night of Egypt? They were feeding on the Lamb whose blood at that moment was sheltering them. They were doing this in liberty of heart, and not anxiously thinking of the scene outside, whether indeed the Angel had passed by their door.

What gave Moses a character, when he was up with God above and beyond the fires of Sinai? He is there, with unvailed face, at home as with the Lord.

What gave Rahab her character after she had hung

out the scarlet line? She got as many under the salvation of it, as ever she could, desirous to share her own well-assured and enjoyed blessing.

And what characterizes Nehemiah's congregation here, as soon as they learn the mystery of the first day of the seventh month? They send portions to others, eat the fat and drink the sweet themselves, and learn the *lesson of glory*, now standing in the *salvation of grace*.

And I now further ask, What is to give the believer his character, what is to form his mind and his experience? Surely, the consciousness of being quickened and saved and accepted. He is to know himself brought nigh by the blood of Christ; though he may remember that he was a Gentile, a sinner, uncircumcised, far off, without God, without hope, a child of wrath even as others. The joy of the Lord is to be his strength, as it was to be Israel's in the day of Nehemiah viii.—a strength that shall deliver from self-seeking and the love of the world in its vanity and covetousness, leading him with largeness of heart, as it did Israel then, to seek to make others as happy as himself, and to wait for the Glory, or the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles.

For, as the Gospel prevails over the Law in the progress of the dispensations of God, so is it to prevail in the heart and conscience of the people of God. Many of us may be feeble, hindered by nature and by Satan, and the good Lord knows how to comfort the feeble and to support the weak, but still we must recognize this which we speak of, to be *His* way, and recognize it also as what ought to be *our* way.

God is to be apprehended by us in grace. We are

to know Him as love, and find our dwelling in Him, on the title of the sacrifice which He Himself has accomplished in Jesus. The Law may have taught us to deal with Him as righteous, and to think of Him as a Judge—and He is all that, it is true ; for all glories belong to Him, whether of power or of holiness, or of majesty or of truth, and of all beside ; but the Gospel teaches us to know Him likewise in grace, gives us communion with Him as a Saviour, and forms our character accordingly.

P E A C E .

At the birth of the Lord, the earth was saluted with words of peace. "Peace on earth," the angels proclaimed in the fields of Bethlehem.

This, however, was but salutation. It was not the authoritative pronouncement of peace. It was like the word which the Lord afterwards put into the lips of His Twelve, or rather of the Seventy, in Luke x., when sending them out, for He then told them, into whatsoever house they entered, first to say, "Peace be to this house." This was a salutation, a wishing well, the proclamation of a good-will towards the house, not an authoritative pronouncement of peace: *that* would rather follow on its being found, that the son of peace was there.

Upon the resurrection of the Lord, however, we have the other thing. "Peace be unto you," the risen Saviour said to His disciples, thus returned to them—and when He said that, He showed them His hands and His side. He gave them to read their title to peace. Peace was now, not merely wished, but authoritatively pronounced, conveyed to them on the warrant of the Cross. Jesus now gave peace to them, because He had already made it for them. And this is the peace that we, who are in it, may testify to our fellow-

sinners. We do not merely, like the commissioned Seventy, say, "Peace be to this house," as saluting it, or wishing it well, but we proclaim to it the sure, settled, purchased peace, which sinners have title to, in the blood of the Cross.

DAY OF VISITATION.

BETHSAIDA.

SCRIPTURE contemplates a day or time of visitation. (Jer. viii. 12 ; Luke xix. 44 ; 1 Pet. ii. 12.)

Such a day may come on an individual, (1 Pet. ii. ;) or on a city, (Luke xix. ;) or on a nation. (Jer. viii.)

It is either in mercy, (Luke xix. ; 1 Pet. ii. ;) or in judgment. (Jer. viii.)

And again ; it may either be used, so as to glorify God by it, (1 Pet. ii. ;) or it may be slighted. (Luke xix.)

The visitation in mercy goes before the visitation in judgment—and the interval may be long or short. We see this in the moral history of different nations—such as Egypt, Israel, and the world itself.

As to Egypt ; Joseph was given to that land in mercy, and by him God made it the head of the nations, and the granary of the whole earth. But Joseph was forgotten, mercy was slighted, and then Moses and the plagues were sent.

As to Israel ; Jesus was given, Messiah was sent, and healing was dispensed, and covenant blessings were brought to the door. But Jesus was rejected, and now desolation and captivity have succeeded.

As to the world ; the death of Christ is now preached in its saving virtue, as that which has for ever and fully satisfied for sin. But that being slighted, the same

death of Christ shall be visited in judgment upon the world, that is guilty of it.

What simple consistency may be found in God's ways! What moral perfection! What a relief to discover it, in the midst of all human, earthly confusions!

The visitation in judgment may not follow, as I already noticed, till after a long interval—as in the last case I have noticed, the moral history of the world—for the present day of grace tarries long indeed, and judgment is slumbering century after century. But again, the interval may be short; and we see this, on two distinguished occasions in the moral dealings of God with His people. The Spirit was poured out largely *just before* the captivity of the Ten Tribes by the Assyrian; as on the Prophets Isaiah, Hosea, Micah, and others. He was again still more largely poured out *just before* the captivity of Judah by the Chaldean; as on Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and others.

These things are so.—But I must add, that such a day, a day of visitation, leaves the place or the person, if that day be slighted, in a worse condition than it found them.

Bethsaida, in the history of the Gospel, I believe, illustrates this.

That city had a day of visitation. It had been greatly favoured. The Lord's mighty works had been done there, beyond the common measure—and Andrew, Peter, and Philip, three of the Lord's Apostles, had belonged to that town. (See John i. 44.)

But such favour, such a day of merciful, gracious visitation, had been slighted. The place had not turned to Him that had blessed it. It had not repented. (Mat.

xi. 20.) Still, it is not altogether beyond the reach of the abounding, though slighted grace of Christ. The Lord visits it, after all this—and when He visits it, He has the resources of His grace and power with Him.

The way, however, in which those resources are now brought forth, after they had been, as we have seen, slighted and unused, is full of meaning, and has a great moral or lesson for us. (Mark viii., 22-26.)

A blind man of Bethsaida (or at Bethsaida) is brought to the Lord, and they beseech Him to touch him.

Surely a touch or a word would have been enough. The healing, obedient to the Lord of Life, would have followed, and followed at once. But it is not so. There is reserve and delay, a more gradual process than the power of Christ (had it felt itself fully free to act) would have demanded, or than it had ever demanded on any former occasion. We have to mark it carefully.

He takes the blind man by the hand, and leads him out of the town. This was significant. Bethsaida had, at this time, lost title to see the works of Christ. For He had called, and that place had not answered. He had done His works there already, and they had not repented. He now takes the blind man out of the town; as of old Moses had taken the tabernacle of the Lord out of the camp. (Ex. xxxiii.) Both of these acts were judicial. They spoke of a distance which the Lord had now, in righteousness, taken, whether from the camp or from the town.

But this reserve or distance left each individual Israelite at liberty to seek the Lord at the tabernacle outside the camp—and here this blind man of Bethsaida may meet the healing power of Christ outside the town.

What consistency in the ways of God! How bright they shine! How Divine glory is stamped on the great material or substance of Scripture, and how it glows in the very tone or style of Scripture!

But while this man of Bethsaida shall meet the healing virtue of the Lord, it must be after a manner that shall eminently distinguish itself.

He spit on his eyes, and put His hands on him, and then asked him, "if he saw aught." This was strange and peculiar. Had the Lord ever before questioned His power? Had He ever hesitated about the perfection of His acts? No—nor does He now, though His words may sound that way. He did not question His power, nor was He ignorant of the present condition of this poor man. But He must and will give character to this occasion. It was a special moment, and He must let it distinguish itself. He would have it now be known, that slighted mercy is sensitive. It ought to be so. It is so with us, ourselves being judges. Would we go and repeat our kindnesses and services to those who had already despised and disregarded them, without at least letting it be known that we felt something? Let the goodness be exercised surely, but it is morally fitting that some expressions should accompany it. And if it be thus with us, so is it thus with God. The whole current of the Book of Judges lets us know that. Each succeeding Deliverer is raised up in the behalf of Israel, with *increased reserve*, because Israel had been sinning against the previous, earlier mercies. And so is it thus with the Lord Jesus in these His doings with this town of Galilee.

The healing proceeds slowly. To the inquiry, if he

saw aught, the man has to reply, "I see men as trees walking."

Still strange this is! How every thing signalises this case! It was not thus with the blind man at Jericho, or with the blind beggar in the ninth of John. One of them has but to say, "I went and washed, and came seeing." And of the others it is written, "Jesus had compassion, and touched their eyes, and *immediately* they received sight, and followed Him." But here the healing is tardy and laboured. Jesus has still to work. He put His hands a second time upon him, and then made him look up. And then, but not till then, not till the end of this lengthened process, was he restored. That is—he was not fully brought under the grace and power of the Son of God; for *that* is our restoration, becoming nothing less than what that grace and power would have us and make us. "He saw every man clearly."

Valuable, serious, weighty narrative! How do all His acts, in the days of His flesh here among us, illustrate some secret of the Divine grace and wisdom! Oh, the marvellous moral variety and fulness that are found in Scripture! Bethsaida was not a *fresh* material in the hand of Christ. It had been untrue to Him, and it must know, that this is felt by Him, though His grace abounds.

And when the mercy is perfected, and the blind man sees every man clearly, the Lord closes the scene by saying to him, "Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town." And this is still of a character with all the rest. As a town, Bethsaida's day was past. "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy

day, the things that belong to thy peace!—but now they are hid from thine eyes.” Its condition was sealed. Judgment because of slighted mercy was before it—as the Lord had already distinctly told of it, in Matthew xi. 22. Therefore is it now said, “Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town.”

Thus it is—but in contrast with this case, I may say, Oh, what comfort is to be found oftentimes, in a *fresh* material. The Lord Himself found it so; the Spirit still finds it so; and we, the saints of God, find it so—as surely many a sample of Divine workmanship in this present day of revival or visitation, may remind us.

The Lord Himself found it so. This He did in Samaria. How free and happy was He there, whether at the well of Jacob, or in the village of Sychar. He was there, as at home, for two days; for the ground had been freshly ploughed up and visited. Sinners were learning salvation, and their faith spread a feast for Him. He had meat to eat there, which was not to be supplied Him even by the diligence of those who were constantly with Him.

The Spirit still finds it so. He would have us always “as new born babes”—coming with freshness of taste and desire, to the milk of the Word which He Himself has prepared and provided for us. (1 Pet. ii. 2.)

And we ourselves find it so—as I have instanced, in our experience of this present day, through which we are passing, in the grace of God.

The Lord Jesus invited Himself to the house and hospitality of Zaccheus, who was then in his freshness, with the bloom of early affection upon him—but “He made as though He would have gone further,” when He

reached the house of those who had been for a long while walking with Him, but who had just been reasoning with thoughts arising in their hearts.

Surely again I may say, Oh, the wondrous moral variety that is to be found in the Book of God! And what expressions of Divine secrets, the secrets of grace and of wisdom, what indications of Divine sympathies and sensibilities, do we get in the pathway of the Lord's Spirit through the circumstances of life, as He went through them day by day!

JOURNEYS TO JERUSALEM.

THE journey of the Wise Men of the East, as we read it in Matthew ii., and the journey of the Queen of the South, as we have it in 2 Chronicles ix., shine with something of kindred beauty and significance before us. They, all of them, go to Jerusalem—but the Wise Men of the East began their journey under the sign or preaching of the Star; the Queen of the South began hers simply on the ground of a report which had reached her in the distant land. For, at times the Lord has visited and guided His elect by signs, visible tokens, dreams, voices, angelic visits, and the like—at times He has simply caused them to hear a report, as in the case of this illustrious lady. But let Him address us as He may, faith is cognizant of His voice, as in these cases. “My sheep hear my voice—and they follow me.”

The Wise Men went to worship, and took offerings with them: the Queen of the South went to inquire at wisdom's gate, and to learn lessons of God; and trafficking for that which was more precious than gold or rubies, she took with her of the choicest treasures of her kingdom.

The journey of the Wise Men is rich in illustrations of the life of faith. But Jerusalem did not satisfy them.

They had to go on to Bethlehem to reach the object of their faith. In the earlier journey of the Queen of the South, Jerusalem answered all expectations. In it we may find some striking moral characteristics, which carry several healthful and significant admonitions to our own souls.

In the first place, I observe, that the report which had reached her touching the King in Jerusalem, at once makes her dissatisfied with her present condition, wealthy though it was, and honorable in no common measure. For she sets out immediately—leaving behind her, her own royal estate, with all its advantages in the flesh and in the world. The fact of her journey bespeaks the uneasiness and dissatisfaction which tidings about Solomon and Jerusalem had awakened.

This speaks in our ears. It tells us of the operation upon our hearts, which the report that has gone abroad about a greater than Solomon, should produce. In like spirit, to this day, the quickened soul, under the report it has received about Jesus, is convicted, and made restless in that condition in which nature has left us, and this report has found us. We have been upset by it—turned out of all the ease and satisfaction which we before may have taken in ourselves and our circumstances or our character.

But again. As soon as this elect lady reached Jerusalem, she set herself to survey all the estate of the King there. She came on that business, and she does it. She is not idle. She acquaints herself with everything. She put her hard questions to the King, listened to his wisdom, and surveyed his glories. The very sitting and apparel of his servants did not escape

her—and surely not, the ascent by which he went up to the house of God.

This again speaks in our ears. When we reach Jesus, our souls make Him their object. We learn Him, we talk of Him, we search the secrets of His grace and glory. We carry the sense of this one thing, that our business is with Him. He is our object.

But thirdly. After this stranger-queen had acquainted herself with all that belonged to the King in Zion, she was satisfied. Her soul was satiated as with marrow and fatness. She knew not what to make of herself. She did not understand her new condition. The joy was overwhelming. The half had not been told her, she says; and Solomon exceeded the fame that had reached her about him. There was no more spirit in her. She returns to her land and to her people, filled. She left him, as the Woman of Sychar left Jesus; emptied of all beside, but filled and satisfied with her new-found treasure.

Such had been her wondrous path. Her journey had begun in the *restless, uneasy sense of need*; all her former fair surface of flattering circumstances being broken up. She had *acquainted herself with the vast, mysterious treasures of the place where her journey had led her*; she had done this carefully, with a heart only the more engaged and interested as she went onward in her search. She ended her journey, or returned to her own land, as one *filled to the very brim of all her expectations and desires*.

The journey from the south to Jerusalem, recorded in the New Testament, has much the same charac-

ters. I mean that of the Eunuch of Ethiopia, in Acts viii.

He begins his journey as with an unsettled conscience. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship—but he left that city of solemnities, that city of the Temple and service of God, with its priesthood and ordinances, still unsettled—and we see him an anxious inquirer on his way from Jerusalem to the southern Gaza. Nothing in that centre of religious provisions and observances had given rest to the soul. He was dissatisfied with the worship he had been rendering there. His conscience was not purged. He had as yet no answer for God. There was no rest in his spirit. Jerusalem, I may say, had disappointed him, as it had the Wise Men.

But if, like the Queen of Sheba, he were at first, on starting on his way, uneasy and dissatisfied, like her he was deeply engaged with what God was providing for him, through His witnesses and representatives. The Word of God was addressing his soul. The Prophet Isaiah was taking him out of himself. He started not at the surprise of the Stranger's voice in that desert place. All he cared for, all he thought of, was the secret of the Book. He was inspecting that witness of God's grace, as the Queen had once inspected Solomon's estate, the witness of glory. And Philip let him into the secret that he was searching.

And then, he is satisfied. His heart, like hers, is filled with what had now been discovered to him. He pursues the second stage of his journey, from Gaza to Ethiopia, "rejoicing." Philip may leave him, but he can do without him. The woman of Sychar may again

leave her water-pot, and find Jesus everything to her. With a soul satisfied as with marrow and fatness, he can go on his way. Another returns to the south, to Sheba or Ethiopia, with a heart rich in the discoveries he had made on this his visit to Jerusalem.

These kindred characteristics are easily traced in these narratives. But it was rather *conscience* that set the Eunuch on his journey; it was *desire* that moved the Queen. And she came in contact with *glory*, in the Court and estate of Solomon; he with *grace*, in the words of the Prophet Isaiah. But whether God address us with a revelation of His grace or of His glory; whether He address the conscience or the heart, it is His high and divine prerogative, to satisfy us—as He does these two distinguished individuals. He satiates the soul with a manifestation of Himself, let that manifestation take what form it may, or adapt itself to whatever exigency or demand of the soul it please. And such satisfaction we get differently, but very blessedly, exemplified in these two cases.

And let me add one other feature that is common to both. Their spirit was free of all grudging. The Queen surveyed the glories of Solomon, and she could look on his higher, more eminent and excellent estate, without the stir of one single jealous, envious movement. She was too happy for that. She could congratulate the King in Zion, and his servants that waited on him, and his people who heard his wisdom, and return home as one that was privileged only to visit him; but she begrudged them not the richer portion they were enjoying. Her own share of blessing filled her, though her vessel was comparatively small. And

so the Eunuch, I am full sure. He was willing to be a debtor to Philip—to know that it is the less that is blessed of the better: Be it so, his spirit would say. He was happy, he was filled; and if there was no void in his spirit, so we may assure ourselves, there was no grudging there.

What joy there ought to be, as we look at such samples of Divine workmanship! The soul disturbed by reason of its own condition—fixed in earnest searching after Christ—satisfied by the discovery of Him—and then, too happy to dwell amid the tumults and jarrings of that nature that lusteth to envy! And how noiselessly the process is conducted! It goes on in the spirit of a man by the power that works after the pattern of the wind that blows where it lists, but whence it comes and whither it goes we know not.

I have, however, another thought upon this subject of the journeys to Jerusalem.

At times we find, as in the case of the Queen of Sheba, that that great city answered all the expectations that had been formed by the heart respecting it. What was there deeply and fully satisfied her, as we have seen. But Jerusalem has at times grievously disappointed the heart. It did, as I may say again, the Wise Men of the East, who went there looking for the King of the Jews. They had to pass it, and put themselves on another journey, down to Bethlehem in the south. It disappointed the Eunuch also, as I have also observed. He had gone there to worship—but he left it unsatisfied in spirit, and searching for that rest which, as we saw, all the religious provisions of that

city of the Temple and the Priesthood did not, could not, give him. And I may add, it disappointed the Lord Jesus likewise. Instead of finding His welcome and His place there, He had to weep over it and to pronounce its doom, and meet there in His own person what we may here rather remember than mention.

It will, however, in the last days, as it were, revive, and take again the character that it fulfilled in the first days. It will answer all the richest expectations of those multitudes who will then, like the Queen of the south, go up there to see the King in His beauty. The highways will then be thronged with joyous visitors, and the hearts of the thousands of the nations will repeat again what they have found in the holy city. "All nations shall flow unto it," as we read; "and many people shall go and say, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths, for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." And again we read: "It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year, to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." And again: "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord: our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, whither the Tribes go up; the Tribes of the Lord unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." These are among the Divine, inspired witnessings of the satisfying virtue of these journeys to the

city of the great King in the day of the Kingdom, when the pledge which the journey of the Queen of Sheba has given us shall be blessedly redeemed in the joy of the hearts of the thousands of the nations who, in the coming day of Zion's restoration, shall wait there to do willing service to the Lord of the earth.

The sequel, then, is simply weighed. Journeys to Jerusalem either satisfy or disappoint; and it is the Lord Himself that has to determine which. His glory was at that time displayed or reflected there, and therefore her visit satisfied the Queen of Sheba; His grace was not then ministered or testified there, and therefore his visit disappointed the Eunuch of Ethiopia. And thus the value of that city of solemnities was to be measured by the presence of Christ there.

And so, let me say, of all ordinances and services. Jerusalem is but "a city of the Jebusites," if Jesus be not the life and glory of it: it is "the joy of the whole earth," if He be. Like Mount Sinai or Horeb. It is but "Mount Sinai in Arabia," or it takes the dignity of "the mount of God," according as the Lord adopts it or not. The ordinances of the law were "shadows of good things to come," the furniture of God's "beautiful house," or mere "beggarly elements," as Christ used them or disowned them.

THE TWO DEBTORS.

LUKE VII. 36—50.

PRESENT full assurance of soul is the spring of the purest affection and of the freest service. Indeed it is necessary to each of them. The present forgiveness of sins is to be asserted with all confidence.

I ask, What has been the business of the blessed God in this world of ours, if not for the very end of putting us into such a condition? Our *sin* brought Him here—and then, *the putting away of our sin* gave Him His history here, after He had come among us. He died and rose from the dead. For what do I see in that history, the death and resurrection of the Son of God, if I see not the putting away of sin?

As soon as ever sin entered, He was revealed in *this* connection with us. Not as a Lawgiver or a Judge, but as a Saviour. He is seen in the very first promise. It was as a Saviour, as the Purger of sins, He was revealed then, in the mystery of the bruised heel and the bruised head—and that was His death and resurrection as the Son of God and the Lamb of God. And what, again I ask, do I see in those great facts, if I see not the putting away of sin? How can I, with any reason, with any simplicity of mind, stand before the Cross of Christ, and not apprehend the purging of sins there? If I did not apprehend that, every thing would and must rebuke the darkness of my soul. Did

not the rent vail, accompanied by the rent rocks of the earth and the riven graves of the saints, tell out, that the death of the Son of God then accomplished had restored man to God, casting up a highway from the prison-house of him who had the power of death up to the bright heavens, and the throne of the majesty there? Did not the empty sepulchre follow in its appointed day, to bear like witness, and to tell that God was satisfied with the death of Christ, and that it had atoned for sin and made reconciliation? And then, did not the gift and presence of the Holy Ghost come, in its due pentecostal hour, to seal the same great fact? And I further ask, What was the preaching, the Gospel, the testimony of the Apostles immediately afterwards, as we have it in the Book of the Acts? Surely it is, remission, forgiveness of sins, upon the virtue of the blood or death of Jesus, to all who will receive Him. Peter, in his first word in chapter ii., and then in his second word in chapter iii., and in his earliest testimony to the Gentiles at Cæsarea in chapter x., rehearses this great fact—and when Paul takes up the testimony, he takes up the same wondrous tale, as we see in chapter xiii. And in their Epistles, where they teach rather than preach, instructing the saints rather than arousing sinners, we find the same, the Epistle to the Hebrews making it one of its great characteristic businesses, to show us the Purger of our sins now in the highest heavens, in the midst of His own many glories there.

All this is truly and indeed so. And now, our souls are to keep this blessed fact, that sin is put away, as in the foreground. It is not to be treated as something which we might be able to descry in the hazy, misty

distance, after some anxious scrutiny. It is to be set in the foreground, where the rent veil, the resurrection, the pentecost, apostolic preaching and apostolic teaching have already set it, that we may apprehend it as in the very light of noonday, and possess ourselves of it with all assurance.

Scripture, as one once observed, makes a much simpler thing of the putting away of sin, than our religion makes of it. Scripture puts it at the outset, human religion makes it the great attainment. Scripture puts sin in company with the blood of Christ, and it disappears.

We may grant by the way, that when the grace of God which bringeth salvation, and which had shone out so brightly in the first promise, and had maintained its place through the age of the Patriarchs, gets connected, under Moses, with the Law, it becomes clouded. Naturally so, I might say, for it is then mixed up with a foreign element. The forgiveness of sins, God's own provision for the state of the guilty, had a large and various testimony there, I grant; but that testimony was borne by shadows and ordinances and religious official services, which either clouded or incumbered it. The whole Mosaic economy had important ends to answer—but as far as grace was concerned, it clogged and obscured the actions and manifestations of it. Grace did not appear in its simplicity, as in patriarchal days. And according to this, the New Testament, in its Divine reasoning and commentaries, commonly sets the Gospel of grace *in company with the Patriarchs*, but *in contrast with Moses*. Abraham was blessed as a believing Abraham; Moses put a veil on his face, and

the law is declared to have gendered a spirit of bondage to fear.

But grace, at length, emerges from this mixed element, this clouded atmosphere; and now, ascertained and effectuated by the death and resurrection of Christ, it shines, as we have seen, in its infinite brightness, and claims to occupy the chief place in Christianity, and the very foreground in the sight and apprehension of our souls.

From the different purpose and character of each of them, we find this truth, the forgiveness of sins, variously presented to us in *the Gospels*, in *the Acts*, and in *the Epistles*. We have it *preached* to sinners in the Acts: we have it *taught* or expounded to believers in the Epistles: and we have it *illustrated* in individuals in the Gospels. The Spirit, as I may say, is an Evangelist or a Preacher in the Acts; a Teacher of the saints in the Epistles; and in the Gospels we get living narratives, illustrative of what is elsewhere thus preached and taught.

How simply is this leading truth, the forgiveness of sins on the authority and in the name of the death and resurrection of Christ, *preached* in the Acts. Peter begins testimony to that, and repeats it again and again, as we have already said, and Paul continues it.

How largely and forcibly the same truth is *expounded* to us in such Epistles as the Romans and the Hebrews, shown to us in the stability of the foundation on which it rests, and in the glories in which it results—all the Epistles, I may say, assuming it!

And how affectingly is the power of the same truth

in the soul of one who receives it, *illustrated* in this narrative of the Sinner of the city in the house of Simon the Pharisee, at the close of Luke vii. !

This is so indeed. And sweet is this varied method of presenting this great leading truth. We have it preached to sinners, expounded and opened to believers, illustrated in individuals.

In this house of Simon the Pharisee, the Lord comes in contact with two persons, representatives of two moral generations. I mean, His host, and a sinner of the city. And these constitute the two debtors in the parable which the Lord delivers on the occasion, and which is found in the bosom of the narrative.

Simon I look upon as one who surely owned the excellence of the Lord Jesus. He had invited Him into his house as a mark of honour. He was one, too, I doubt not, who would daily own the debt of thankful gratitude for the blessings of God's care and mercy, and know himself to be less than the least of them. He was as one who had been forgiven fifty pence.

The sinner who had now entered his house, most surely was a sinner; but she knew herself to be such. But Jesus was a Saviour; and she knew Him to be such. She was not merely convicted, so as to be confounded and ready to surrender every thing; she was consciously forgiven, as after conviction. She was in a day of grace, out of judgment. She was not, like David of old, before the Angel of God with a drawn sword in his hand. She was before Him as her salvation—not in the sense merely of providential mercies, but of eternal acceptance. She was as a debtor who had been forgiven five hundred pence.

Such, I believe, was this woman, this sinner of the city, and, in the midst of the narratives in the Evangelists, she illustrates the virtues and victories which accompany the knowledge of forgiveness.

It made her bold. She ventured, sinner as she was, into the house of a Pharisee. It was very bold of her. She might have counted on the very thing she got—contempt and injurious whisperings, the murmurings of self-righteous reproach. And what she might have counted on she got.

It made her happy. That made her independent of the creature, and set her above the world. *It put into her the spirit of sacrifice and of worship.* All that she was and had was not good enough or rich enough for the One who had saved her, who had loved her and given Himself for her. She brought all with her to the feet of Jesus, and cared not that any should be conscious of her but Himself. She was reading the new name on the white stone. The Pharisee's thoughts of scorn were lost upon her; as Michal's reproaches had been lost upon David in a moment of kindred joy. She had her all in Jesus, and got her answer to all from Jesus.

She was one who knew the great leading characteristic truth of Christianity, as we have said, the forgiveness of sins. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." She knew Jesus as Simon did not. She stood in another relationship to Him. He was before her as her Saviour. Simon took but very poor and partial account of her. He could not understand her, and that which he knew, he knew altogether in a way that deceived him. He said to himself, that "she was a

sinner." To be sure she was. None but a sinner could render such sacrifices as she was then offering. But Simon did not know that her sinner-character was really the root and ground of all he was then witnessing. Nor did he know his Guest either. He doubted that He could be a prophet—but He soon let him know, that He was not merely a prophet, but a prophet of a Divine order, who could tell him the secret workings of his own heart. He said that the woman *touched* the Lord. "Was that all, Simon?" we might say to him. Surely the whole action was lost on him, for he did not understand it. The kisses and the tears and the treasures of the alabaster box he saw as if he saw not. The fifty pence was far away indeed from measuring the five hundred.

Surely this is so—and this I receive as the characteristic lesson of this little narrative, and of the parable it carries in the midst of it. It illustrates the value of the soul having right thoughts of its relationship to God, the value of knowing that we are sinners, sinners hopelessly, eternally self-ruined, but that Jesus is nothing less to us than a present Saviour, a perfect Saviour, a Saviour for eternity.

The Gospel, amid the multitude of moral glories which shine in it, has this, that it forms the most wondrous and precious link between God and His creatures, a link which, in its different way, is inestimable both to the Giver and the receiver—the work of salvation with all its results on God's part, and responsive grateful love on the sinner's—the highest benefit to the most distant and undeserving.

Angels have kept their first estate, formed as they were in excellency of strength and brightness; and their original, their "first estate," as it is called, being thus kept, is the link between them and their Creator. Adam's innocency, as we may admit for a moment, kept him in his connection with God as a creature formed upright, to walk in the garden of Eden. But what are such links as these in comparison with that which grace has formed in the great system of salvation?

And how, then, does it become our duty, our very obedience, our service, to entertain rich and sure thoughts of the forgiveness of sins and the salvation of God! Affection will then return to Him after the pattern of this sinner of the city. And how Divinely beautiful and wondrous, surely I may say, is that Book which opens by exhibiting the link of *innocency* between the Lord God and His creatures, and closes by exhibiting that of *salvation*! The Lamb's wife in glory will love as Adam in the garden could not have loved. She will love, I may take leave to say, after the pattern of this woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. She will love in the strength and joy of that grace which has forgiven five hundred pence.

And indeed I judge that I can say, I know not that any one, in the progress of Scripture from the very beginning of it to the very end, has illustrated the affection of the Bride of the Lamb more deeply and affectingly than she has done. The family at Bethany and Mary Magdalene express very fervent personal affection. Their hearts were attracted and drawn and detained very beautifully. One greatly enjoys the

sights we get of them. And I may say, that the moral power which lies in the sense of forgiveness and acceptance is finely exhibited in the early gathering of believers at Jerusalem in Acts ii. And likewise, that David in Psalm xxxii., and Isaiah in chap. vi. of his prophecy, and repentant Israel, as anticipated in Isaiah liii. and Micah vii., among a multitude beside, set forth some very fine emotions of the soul under the fresh sense of pardon and reconciliation. And so, Peter and Matthew and Zaccheus, and the Samaritan in the days of the Evangelists, and Paul afterwards, as he delineates the condition of his heart towards the Lord Jesus, in Gal. ii. 19-21. All this is so; and all these cases give us great samples of the power of the sense of forgiveness. But again I say, I know not that anywhere we get so affecting an illustration of this, as in this sinner of the city in Luke vii. She presents to us the full measure and the perfect way, in which, at times, the sense of forgiveness and the consciousness of acceptance seizes upon the whole soul, commanding it with unquestioned, unrivalled authority, laying its easy and welcome yoke upon every thing, and filling the spirit with the richest and most generous affections.

What will it be, to have hearts for eternity in the possession of such a joy as these conditions secure to them!

There are, however, incidental or secondary lessons in this little narrative. We see in it, or we learn by it, that all is to re-appear in due time and place. The services of the woman and the neglects of Simon are all remembered by the Lord at the last. All seemed

to have been passed over, at the time the things were either done or left undone; but it was not so. And this illustrates an interesting, serious truth. Nothing is of no importance, but every thing has a character, a moral character in it, while there are balances now hid in the sanctuary of God that are destined to weigh it by-and-by. As here—the kisses and the tears and the service of the hair of the head, and the fragrant treasures of the alabaster box, which had marked the previous way of this loving woman, with the corresponding neglects of the Pharisees, are all rehearsed by the Lord Himself at a moment when perhaps both of them were unaware—as it is written, “The Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.”

This may be laid to heart. Have we been rendering *secret* service to Christ? Have we any interest in the day of the manifestation of all things? How stand we in relation to that day? I put not these as questions of life, but as godly appeals to my own heart and ways, that present doings may be set in the light of coming days.

And again in this instructive story. At the end the Lord publishes the salvation of the woman in the face of all those who were sitting at meat with Him. He puts His own broad, authoritative seal upon the fact that she was forgiven, as in the presence of the whole world, let there be what accusing thoughts or unbelieving questionings there may be. “Thy sins are forgiven,” the Lord says to her—“and they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?” What a voice upon

the waters that of Jesus must have been! The waters were swelling again—the winds and the waves of Galilee were abroad—but the voice of Jesus had again risen. The whispers and the accusings were not heard by the woman. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.” This was enough for her.*

But then, in turning from her accusers to herself, the Lord changes His voice. The fruit of forgiveness may be, and is, *love*, but the root and spring of forgiveness is *faith*. It was not her love, ardent and self-surrendering as it was, which had saved her. Her faith had gone before her salvation, ere this scene had opened; love now comes after it, as we have been seeing. And according to all this, when He now turns from her accusers to herself, He says, “Thy *faith* hath saved thee; go in peace.” No mention of love or what love had done, in company with salvation. Salvation is of grace, in company with the blood of Christ and the faith that apprehends and leans upon that blood. Salvation is too high a thing to stand on a level with the works of man. It is God’s work, and it comes “to him that worketh not,” as saith the Apostle. “It is of faith, that it might be by grace.”

And let me add, that she who is principal in the Book of the Canticles represents the same generation to which this woman belonged. She stands above the daughters of Jerusalem, as this one does above Simon

* Simon was not of that generation of Pharisees who laid snares for the Lord, like him of chap. xi.; but neither was he of one generation with Levi, who when he made a feast for Jesus, set publicans and sinners in His company.

the Pharisee. She had discovered that "she was black yet comely," and that was the secret of her earnest, longing affection. She thus reminds us of the elect one in the Canticles, and she foreshadows, in her affection, the Lamb's wife. She stands as between them, and they all belong to one generation. "I am black but comely," expresses the secret of such affection. It is the joy and the love of consciously pardoned and accepted sinners that fills the spirit of the one in the Canticles, of this poor sinner of the city, and of the Bride-companion, the sister and the Spouse, the wife of the Lamb for ever.

THE ACCOMPLISHED DECEASE.

LUKE IX., 30, 31.

THEY *talked* of His *decease* which He was to *accomplish*—three words of sweet and various import. They tell us of the intimacy, the personal intimacy, that there is between the Lord and the elect in the realms of glory. As it was in the garden of Eden at the beginning, and then among the patriarchs, and then with the disciples and their Divine Master in the days of the Evangelists, so will it be in the ages of glory, there will be personal intimacy between the Lord and His people, so signified by the word “talk.” “God talked with Abraham.”

But we have the *subject* of their conversation also—it was His *decease*—a theme most worthy to engage the glorified hosts. We may well speak of it on every Lord’s Day, in the light of the *resurrection*, since the ransomed in the heavens speak of it in the light of the *glory*. For it is that great fact or mystery that will be celebrated for ever, as it is the great fact that is to prove itself the pillars of eternity, the pillars of the creation of God.

And again, they will let us learn a very weighty matter connected with this subject—it was a *decease* that was to be *accomplished*—a word which suggests the full, finished, perfected character of the way in

which that great mystery, the death of the Lamb of God at Jerusalem, was to be conducted. All due solemnity was to mark it, that nothing might be left uneffected, unproduced, or unsecured, which it was counselled to do.

And what a comfort to us sinners! The sacrifice of the Lamb of God was the precious eternal secret that was to give us blessed eternal peace; and we have to learn that all that was committed to it to do, it has done—the counsels, the throne, the weights and measures of the sanctuary of salvation, all have been satisfied to the last jot and tittle.

I would meditate on this accomplishment of the decease of the Lamb of God a little carefully.

As we read Leviticus xvi., we may be impressed with the carefulness and order and exact and perfect regularity with which the Priest went through the business of the Day of Atonement. No haste, but all in well-ordered and defined exactness from first to last.

He was to *take* the appointed victims, whether bullock or goat. Then, he was to *offer* them. Then, he was to *kill* them, as in due time and order. He had then to *prepare the cloud of incense*, which was to accompany and invest him, when he went into the holiest with the blood. And (enrobed with this cloud, his simple holy linen suit, not his high-priestly garments of glory and beauty, being upon him) having entered the holiest, *he sprinkles the blood on and before the mercy-seat*; in witness that God on the throne of righteousness had accepted the sacrifice. He then comes forth, and *uses* the same blood, (the blood which had thus been accredited and sanctioned at the throne) for the

reconciling of the outer places and the outer things—no man but himself being allowed in the sanctuary while he was thus, in all this solemnity, going through the business of this mysterious day.

And having thus reconciled the outer places and things, *he lays the iniquities of the people on the head of a goat*, called the scape-goat, and sends him into a land where those iniquities could never again be called to remembrance.

Then, arrayed with his proper priestly garments of glory and beauty, *he offers a burnt-offering* for himself, and another for the people; a witness that all this great and gracious work had issued in the worship and praise which was thus rendered to Him, by the ransomed, the blood-purchased, congregation of the Lord. And then, he puts *the fat* of the sin-offering upon the altar, in token that the blessed God had the richest portion of the feast, the deepest joy in this sacrifice and atonement, reserved for Himself—after the manner, I may say, of the Father in the parable of the Prodigal.*

The sin-offerings, both bullock and goat, were then *entirely consumed* “without the camp”—and the fit man who had taken away the scape-goat, and the other who had now thus consumed the sin-offerings, carefully purify themselves, and then take their place in the camp again.

Such was the business of this great day in Israel, the day of atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month. I affect not here to interpret it; I merely design so to

* The Gospel is called, “the glorious Gospel of the blessed (happy) God,” in 1 Tim. i. 11. This is according to this ordinance, “the fat upon the altar.”

present it, as to show *the careful and deliberate way in which it was accomplished*, the well-defined and well-ordered manner in which this great solemnity was gone through and celebrated in all its stages, and through the length of its proceeding, from first to last.

Now this is in company with the great substantive atonement accomplished in the hour of the Cross. With what calm, sacred, measured, well-weighed advisedness, the death of the Lord Jesus was brought to pass! Well surely might Moses and Elias have spoken to Him about His "decease" which He was to "accomplish" at Jerusalem. All along the course of His ministerial life, He had been exposed to the enmity of the world. Nay, at His very birth it was so. And at all times, man appeared to have Him at his mercy. As far as the scenes through which He passed expressed His conditions, there was no guard, no Mahanaim around Him, no angelic host ascending and descending for His security or provision. Nor would He let His voice be heard in the streets, refusing to make a party for Himself meeting confederacy by confederacy, when He might have done so. And yet, none could lay hands on Him till His hour was come. As in the fulness of time He was born, so in the fulness of time, but not till then, He must die. But when that time does come, all is fulfilled in calm, sacred, measured, well-weighed advisedness—as we may see from the hour of the last supper to the death itself.

At the Supper, as a Victim, He bound Himself to the horns of the altar. In Gethsemane, immediately afterwards, He renews this surrender of Himself to His Father. When the soldiers come to take Him, they

cannot touch Him till He pleases. But in due time He puts Himself, as a *willing* captive, into their hands. He passes from the traitor-kiss of one of His own into the hands of the Jews, and from them into the hands of the Gentiles—because such things had been prophesied of him. Every jot and tittle of Scripture is fulfilled, even to His saying, “I thirst.” All His foretold sorrow, in all its manifold forms of endurance and insult, was realized; the very garments also in which He suffered, and the company that were with Him on the cross. His disciples forsake Him, the sheep of the flock are scattered abroad, for thus had the Prophets written. And then, when all was finished, and the paschal hour had fully come, He went into the three hours of darkness under the bruising of the hand of God as His Lamb for the sacrifice.

The death is thus wonderful, in the very form and character of its accomplishment, as it is beyond all thought wonderful in its moral glories, and in its saving, cleansing virtues.*

But in contrast with all this, let us consider, for another moment, the death of the Baptist which went before this death of the Lord Jesus, and that of Stephen which followed it. What a difference! And yet, no wonder—all is easily accounted for.

There was no value with the *throne* of God, no place

* The same deliberated order marks His burial and resurrection afterwards. There is no haste, according to the way of man, as though man had the scene in his hand, but all is in the calm and full strength of God according to counsels and prophecies. The day of the resurrection had fully to come, as well as that of the birth and death.

in the *counsels* of God, for the death of either John or Stephen. Precious in the sight of God they were, we may assure ourselves—but they were not important, again I say, either to the throne or to the counsels of God. Neither His righteousness nor His grace demanded them. Secrecy and haste may, therefore, give them their character and their history. Nor is it necessary that the material of them, the circumstances that accompany them, should give them any dignity. Neither of them was a “decease” “accomplished,” as Moses and Elias speak of that of Jesus.

The Baptist was the victim of the wanton passion of a woman; Stephen was a martyr at the hands of the sudden, heated frenzy of a blinded and religious rabble. This was the history of these deaths. And how they set off the one we have been looking at, and which lay between them! Not that they were not, as I have already said, precious to God. Indeed they were, deeply so. (Ps. cxvi. 15.) But they were not taken into His hand, according to eternal counsels, and according to prophecies which had gone before from the beginning, as His was. The passions of man disposed of John and Stephen. “They did to them whatsoever they listed,” I might say. But the counsels and the throne of God, His righteousness and His grace, the glorious revelations of Himself, the whole story of creation in its purpose and in its results, stand to account for the death of Jesus, and have their interest in it.

With this the *convicted* sinner has to acquaint himself, in this the *believing* sinner reads his title. What an object for the sustaining of eternity, and for the joy and celebration of eternity!

DIVINE MANIFESTATIONS.

THE Lord addressed His people of old in visions. The eye then, of course, realized the revelation; for it was a sensible form of one sort or another which conveyed the revelation.

Now, it is *faith* that is addressed. But faith realizes its object as surely as sight or hearing, of old, did. Faith "is the evidence of things not seen."

And like fruit waits on this, let the realization be accomplished whether by the eye or by faith.

There was a vision of the Throne and the Seraphim in the Temple filled with smoke, to Isaiah; and he was convicted and overwhelmed. Then there was the application to his lips of the purging coal from the altar; and he was restored to peace. (Isa. vi.)

We may see the like process, though by other instruments, in the persons of Ezekiel and Daniel. (Ezek. i.; Dan. x.)

We have the same under the ministry of the Lord Jesus, as here under ancient visions. To Peter in Luke v. the Lord was manifested, through the draught of fishes, in a way that overwhelmed him. He was convinced of being a sinner then, as the prophets, of whom I have spoken, had been. But the words of Jesus restored him to peace; as different instruments applied to them, restored the prophets. And so, the

Samaritan. The word of the Lord first convicted her, as much disclosed to her, her condition as a sinner, as the sight of the Glory had convicted Isaiah. But the further words of the Lord, in like manner, restored her.

And still further, we have the same effects under the preaching of the Apostles.

Peter's word in Acts ii. draws out the cry, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and then, his further word imparted joy and peace in believing.

The same effect from simple, intelligible speaking in the assembly of the saints, without anything marvelous or miraculous, is contemplated in 1 Cor. xiv. 23-25.

Thus, the like effects are wrought, though the circumstances change from palpable visions or touches, to the Lord's personal ministry, or from that to simple testimony or preaching.

All that is needed is, the realization of the thing revealed—and faith does that under the Word, as the eye would do it in presence of a vision. Of course, the Spirit, we know, must give the faith.

Another illustration of this occurs to me.

Elisha followed Elijah along the road that was leading Elijah to his translation. Temptations beset the path. Difficulties crowded there, and hindrances were repeated. But the purpose of Elisha's soul was fixed and single. He purposed to be with his master all along the way to the very end. He would hear of nothing else; and therefore hindrances and difficulties and temptations got a ready answer from him. (2 Kings ii.)

The saints at Thessalonica had nothing but a report to lean on. They had no vision, no miracle. They had no master, as Elisha had, in their company, who

they knew was to be taken "from their head," no sensible sign to feed the expectations of their hearts. But the objects of faith were as real to them, as the sensible things were to Elisha; and the like fruit and effect was wrought in them. In the spirit of victory they disposed of hindrances, as he had done. They turned from dumb idols. Faith had its work in them, love its labour, hope its patience. They served the living God, and waited for the Son from heaven.

Was all this anything less than Elisha following Elijah all the way from Gilgal to the other side of Jordan, round by Bethel? The Thessalonians, as surely as the Prophet, had their loins girded and their lights burning, and were as servants that waited for their Lord. Faith in a divine report wrought as effectually in them, as the palpable presence of his master did in him. And the like fruit was borne. All we want is to *realize* our object, and faith does that as well as sight or touch or hearing.

But the effect of a manifestation of God, while it does not necessarily depend on something palpable, as a vision or a miracle, *will have to be measured by the condition of the soul to which it is made.* This is so; and this is an important moral truth. And this, Scripture illustrates for us also.

Jacob had been greatly wrong at his father's bed-side; (Gen. xxvii. ;) and at Bethel he was tasting the bitterness of his doings, a wanderer then from his father's house, unfriended and unsheltered. In the glory of goodness, God is manifested to him. The opened heavens, the ladder, and the angels, afforded a wondrous answer from the grace of God to such an one as

Jacob then was. But so it was. The Lord is wonderful to His saints, while *suffering* under His rebukes for their naughtinesses.

Jacob had been, after this, very unbelieving at Peniel. (Gen. xxxii.) He had dreaded Esau's host in the presence of God's host. He had turned his eye from the Lord to the creature; and had trembled and calculated and prayed, as though He that was for him were not more than he that was against him; though the One was God, and the other man. The Lord rebukes this—surely He does. He withstands Jacob. But Jacob holding up under this rebuke, his faith reviving, and grasping the Lord, the Lord gives him a wondrous manifestation of His grace, allowing him to prevail over Him, and then giving him a new name and a fresh blessing.

Such were the materials in Jacob's history, on these two great occasions, at Bethel and at Peniel. But the experience of this saint of God on each occasion was different.

At Bethel, Jacob's experience was of a mixed nature. He said the place was "dreadful," and yet "the gate of heaven." He was encouraged by the vision, but we can scarcely say, he was gladdened by it. But at Peniel, all was joy to him. He has a boast, a holy triumph, on his lips, and addresses himself to his journey as in the light of the face of God.

Here is a difference; and a difference to be accounted for by the condition of the saint himself—not by the manifestation—for that at Bethel exceeded.

There was in him no exercise of spirit at Bethel, as there was at Peniel. He was *asleep* there, he was

awake here. He was simply acted on there, he recovered and stirred himself here. There were moral differences in the same soul; and consequently different experiences. Peniel was more to Jacob, than Bethel had been; a manifestation of God is more to a waking than to a sleeping saint. It is found to be so at this day, as it is thus seen to have been in the early days of the Patriarchs.

And here let me contrast Moses at the vision in the cleft Rock, with Jacob at either Bethel or Peniel. See Exodus xxxiii., xxxiv.

Moses pleads with the Lord, and prays that he may be shown "His way." What he had as yet heard of Him would not do for him. He had already seen Him as the Lawgiver, and as the Lord of the conditional covenant, even eating and drinking in His presence, together with seventy of the elders of Israel. (Ex. xix. and xxiv.) But such manifestations of God would not do. Moses was not satisfied. And rightly so; for Israel was at that moment lying under his eye, in moral ruins—all was over with them on the terms of Law, or under their own covenant; and Moses, therefore, must see God in His own way. He must know *Himself*, as he now tells Him—know Him in sovereign grace.

The Lord promises to do as His servant thus craved. He will let His glory pass before him, "all His goodness," His sovereign grace, that grace which, as in the Gospel, aboundeth. And He does so.

Moses is deeply, fully satisfied. He bows and worships. He asks no more—no more manifestations of God—only desires that He who had now descended and

stood with him, and passed by in His own proper glory, might go along the way with him and with Israel.

This was a blessed experience indeed. It was as “an overflowing and pouring down in a living and life-giving stream.” And why this rich enjoyment? Moses had sought this. He was not asleep under the vision, as Jacob was at Bethel; nor had he simply recovered himself under it, as Jacob did at Peniel; he had himself sought it. It was exercise of spirit that had led him to the vision, and thus he was prepared for the full power of it; and the full power of it he got.

DIVINE INTIMACY.

THE intimacy between the Lord and His elect is beyond, we may say, what is known elsewhere. Angels do His pleasure, wait in His presence, have kept their first estate, and excel in that strength that serves Him. But they are not where elect sinners are. They learn, *through the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God—to us, all that the Son has received from the Father, *He* has made known.

The Saviour acquaints Himself with the secrets of the bosom of the sinner; while He communicates to such an one the secrets of the Divine bosom. This is intimacy indeed. See it illustrated at the well of Sychar. See it, in the stories of Abraham, Moses, David, and others. It is marvellous to say this—but so it is. We are not called to prove it—Scripture does that both by doctrine and illustration. We are called to believe it and enjoy it.

We see the Spirit of God, by the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Romans, leading the saints along two different paths—the path of *grace*, in chap. i.—viii.; the path of *knowledge*, in chap. ix.—xi.

He finds us, at the beginning, in our ruins. We are taken up as sinners, having come short of His glory, and are in revolt and distance from Him. It is from such a point we start on the way. But He leads us

along from our depths to His heights, from our ruins to His wonders and riches of mercy. And at last He plants us on an elevation where we can challenge all our enemies, and find ourselves above all that might be against us. Who can be against us? is the language of the heart there; who can accuse, who can condemn, who can separate?

Having thus conducted us the whole way, along the path of mercy, and settled our own questions for ever, He again takes us by the hand, to lead us along another path, the path of wisdom or knowledge, where we learn, not our own interests as sinners, but the various riches and secrets of His own counsels from the beginning to the end of them. Nor does He let go the hand of the saved sinner whom He is here conducting, till He plants him on another elevation, and puts another rapture in his spirit—not an exultation in his own blessedness under the gifts of grace, as we see at the end of the previous path, but a triumph in the ways and purposes of God through the light of these Divine communications now made to him.

And is not all this, intimacy? First, to bring home a banished one, to fit a sinner for His presence, and set him there in liberty and strength and joy, and then to tell him all His counsels?

The woman of Sychar got the first of these, but not the second; at least at that time. Very fitting that was. The Saviour told her all about herself, and then so showed Himself to her, that her spirit was filled with the exultation that we find at the close of the first of those paths we have been tracing in the Epistle to the Romans—*i. e.*, what we read at the end of chap. viii. But the

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time had not then come, to lead her along the second path. Very fitting, again I say, all this was as to her.

But if we look far back, at Genesis xviii., xix., there we shall see the case of a saved sinner, a saint of God, led along each of these paths; or rather, such an one already standing at the end of the one, led along, as from that standing, all the way of the other.

The Lord comes to Abraham as he was sitting at the door of his tent near Hebron. Like one who knew Him well, Abraham rises and worships, and proposes to get some refreshment ready for Him. Accordingly, the repast is prepared and partaken. Abraham thus enjoys the grace in which he stood. The presence of God is his home. He illustrates a soul in Romans viii. 31-39. But being there, he is ready to take a further walk in company with his Divine Master. And so he does. They rise together from under the tree, where the feast was shared; and as they go on together, the Lord communicates His secrets to Abraham.

Can intimacy exceed this? "I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you."* Angels, again I say, are not presented thus to us—nor is Adam in the innocency of the garden of Eden. But saved sinners occupy these places, without robbery. They take the white stone and read a new name there, which no one knows but he who receives it.

Look at John's Gospel and John's Apocalypse as other illustrations of these same things. Here is one

* Wondrous grace! God the Father will not have us servants, but sons: the Lord Jesus will not have us servants, but friends.

sinner after another, in that Gospel, led along the path of grace, as from his own depth of ruins, to God's own heights of salvation and peace, to exult there in the spirit that closes Romans viii. And in the Apocalypse, how is John himself, (saved sinner as he was, standing at the end of the path of grace,) led along the whole way of the Divine counsels, and instructed in the secrets of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials, till he is left in sight of the holy Jerusalem, as in the rapture that closes Romans xi. !

These paths are bright indeed—the sinner, at the end of the one, exults in his own condition, saved with a sure and everlasting salvation—the saint, at the end of the other, exults in the counsels of God, all disclosed to him, so that he may walk in the light as God is in the light. What shall be done to the elect, we may say, whom the Lord delighteth to honour.

Now, I would further say, that Psalms xxiii. and xxiv. are utterances of a soul, while on these two paths which I have been looking at. In the twenty-third, the saint is walking along the way where grace has set him. He counts, therefore, upon every thing. All things are his ; and he may surely want all. He knows that he is under the conduct and care of a Shepherd who can minister all to him ; edification, refreshment, restoration, a rod and a staff for the valley of the shadow of death, a table and an overrunning cup, and anointing oil for the very presence of enemies ; and a store of goodness and mercy till the path ends in the house of the Lord, till the care and tendence and provisions of grace end in the home of glory.

Thus the saved sinner contemplates his own blessed-

ness, celebrates it in the secret of his own spirit, as he is taught to know it in Romans i.—viii. He is *seen* in this Psalm on the path which that Scripture *casts up before him*.

In the twenty-fourth, the saint is walking along a line of wondrous light, on which the Spirit of wisdom and revelation has set him. He contemplates, not his own blessings and blessedness, as he had been doing in the twenty-third, but the purposes of God, the secrets of Divine counsels, the glories of Christ, His doings, His judgments, His virtues, His rights, His destiny. He listens, in spirit, to that welcome that awaits Him after He has ended the judgments He had to execute, and maintained the character He had to exhibit, at the very gates of the realms of glory—to the challenges which there addressed Him from those who delighted themselves in hearing again and again the story of His doings and His honours.

Thus the saved sinner contemplates the wisdom and way of God; not the grace that has visited himself, but the counsels that have given Christ His place and glories. He is *seen* here on that very path which Romans ix.—xi. *had cast up before him*.

CONSCIENCE.

JOHN I.—IX.

IN John's Gospel, we see the Lord coming forth to *sinner*s. He is not so much the Healer of Israel, doing wonders of goodness in the bodies of men, cleansing the lepers, or restoring to health all manner of sickness and disease among the people; but it is rather *the soul* He seeks, and, therefore, it is *the conscience* He deals with. If the conscience be not before Him, He has not His subject or His material before Him. He has nothing to deal with, or operate upon, according to the character He is filling or sustaining.

This gives us to know what He is, and what are His purpose and His business in every scene. It may be a happy conscience, an awakened, uneasy conscience, a sleepy, unbroken conscience, or a bad conscience. He deals with all this variety—but in it all, we see conscience in some condition or another before Him.

In Andrew, we have a simple picture of a *happy* conscience, or a happy sinner. He had gone to Jesus as a sinner, for he had gone to Him as “the Lamb of God,” and been therefore accepted and welcomed and entertained by Jesus; and he leaves Him happy. His heart is free; and he can therefore think of others, and make it his business to bring Jesus and other sinners, like himself, together. He preaches, as a happy sinner

would preach. He tells the first fellow-sinner he meets, and that is his brother Simon, that he has *found* "the Christ," language that bespeaks the satisfaction of his soul; and then, in full consistent benevolence, he invites Simon to come and share the Christ of God with him.

Here we see a conscience *at liberty*, because the sinner has found Jesus. But we have other conditions of it.

In Nathanael, the conscience had been *already awakened*. Under the fig-tree, I believe, he had been confessing himself a sinner, meditating on his condition before God—for it is the spirit of confession which, in Divine reckoning, makes us "guileless;" and that is the character in which the Lord recognises Nathanael. And the confessions of the lips are the utterances of the fragments of the heart. They are not real, if they be not this. Nathanael was, thus, a broken-hearted man. The Lord, therefore, had been in spirit already in company with him, before Philip called him, for the yearnings of an awakened soul are ever dear to Him. He tells him so—as He had afore announced by His Prophet. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." (Isa. lvii. 15.)

And on His gracious salutation, and letting him know that He had thus known him, Nathanael's soul is amazed. "Rabbi," says he, "thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." This was revival to his heart. The high and lofty One thus made good another portion of that same oracle of the Prophet; "to

revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Now, this case shows us the Lord's blessed dealings with an *awakened* conscience, reviving and gladdening it, or making it a *relieved, delivered conscience*. In the Samaritan, the conscience was still *asleep*. It had to be roused, brought into God's presence with all its burthen and guilt upon it. The Lord, accordingly, forces her to discover herself. All the guilty secrets of her soul were dragged forth to the light. But she stands—though overwhelmed, and though nature, for a moment, set itself to weave a veil between herself and her sin, she remains, as in the light that had detected and exposed her; *and that is the spring of her future blessedness*—for the Lord quickly fills that place with the tokens of His grace, and no longer allows it to be merely the witness of her guilt and shame.

There is something in this mysterious Stranger that works on her spirit—and she names the name of "Messias" in His ear, as One that, in some sense, she was looking for. Then, the conscience having been already stirred, and now the vessel opened, the Saviour reveals Himself; the Stranger proves to be the Messias she had named, and she is blest and satisfied.

Here we see what the Lord will do with a conscience that needs to be aroused, if the sinner, in spite of shame and exposure, will still abide His presence. For it is, surely, the way of blessedness, to value *Christ* more than *character*. We may say, in a sense, all depends on that. She no longer hid herself, but told her neighbours that she had been thoroughly exposed.

In the case of the Pharisees, or the accusers of the

adulteress, the conscience is *bad*. A wicked purpose was filling their hearts all the time they were in the presence of Christ. What must He do with such a people? His presence shall be found intolerable to them. "Being convicted by their own conscience, they went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

What less could be done with such a shocking material? And so will it be by-and-by. All the wicked must perish from the presence of the Lord. Like smoke shall they be driven away. This was not the common way of Jesus; for He came not to judge but to save. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." But when these accusers of the sinner would fain have her at the fiery hill, and deal in law with her, then the Lord can turn the heat of that place against them, and give in them a sample of the day of doom, when the wicked shall perish from the presence of the Lord.

Unlike the poor Samaritan, they valued their character. Being exposed, they would not stand it. They would rather hide their sin, than have it published, and borne away. For such Christ has died in vain. They frustrate the grace of God. They sin against their own souls.

Thus, the Lord Jesus is seen to deal with the conscience in different conditions. With the awakened conscience He deals in all grace, giving it, as the contrite heart, to know that He revives it, and dwells on high with it.—With the sinner who will still abide with Him, though under the pain of being exposed and made naked to his shame, He will deal till He relieve

and satisfy him.—With the wicked who practise their wickedness, and when exposed will leave Him, and rather keep their place and character among men, than reach the virtue of His presence, He shows that presence to be intolerable.

These are Nathanael, the Samaritan, and the Pharisees. He dwells in the high and holy place with the contrite—leads the poor convicted one who will still tarry with Him along the path of light and life—con-signs to the fiery hill and to separation from Himself, the wicked who rather practise their wickedness than seek His presence, and value their character more than interest in Christ.

In these simple, unpretending narratives, we get these precious secrets of the ways of God in Christ, thus discovered to us.—There remains, however, another, which I must not pass. I allude to the Blind Beggar of chapter ix.

In him we see an *honest* conscience. It is not a happy, or an awakened, or a sleepy, or a bad conscience. We do not see in him any uneasiness about his soul. He had not been under a fig-tree with Nathanael—nor did the arrow of conviction enter him, through the word of Christ, as it had penetrated to the deepest secrets of the Samaritan. It is not in such quickened conditions we see him. But he is honest. He is true to the light he has, and he will hold to the facts he knows. He suffers, rather than yield his integrity; and the Pharisees cast him out. Religiousness persecutes truthfulness—a common case.

Could Jesus leave such an one alone? Could He be

indifferent to him? We know He could not. He heard that they had cast him out, and we may conclude that He at once sought him out; for we read, "when Jesus had *found* him." He made him His object—and the sight of Jesus and this Beggar meeting for the second time is full of blessing and comfort.

As yet, this poor man knew Him only in His power to heal him. There had been no exercise of *soul as a sinner*, though there was an *honest conscience*. But on seeing Jesus now the second time, outside the camp, his soul is exercised. Jesus calls him into this exercise. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" And the poor man is at once made ready to take anything from Jesus. "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" And Jesus reveals Himself to him as the One who had given him sight when he was blind, and now takes him up, when all were casting him out. "Thou hast both seen him," says the Lord, "and it is He that talketh with thee." The soul then discovers Jesus. Love and power thus combined, and thus acting in Divine virtue, was enough. "Lord, I believe," he answered, and then "he worshipped Him."

Thus He reached his soul, and dealt with him. And we are conscious, that while he was only an honest man before, he is now a quickened soul. *For an honest conscience is not a saved soul.*

But in addition to all this, let me notice Paul's dealing with the conscience, in his Epistles. He sees none of these varieties. He sees the sinner just as he is, a sinner. He instructs the conscience how it should deal with God and His Gospel, rather than shows us,

as in the Gospel, how Christ deals with it. He tells the conscience that it may enjoy a *purged* condition—not merely an awakened or convicted or honest condition, but a *purged* condition.

This argument is found in Hebrews ix., x. The Apostle there teaches that we may have a good or a *purged* conscience, by faith in Christ, because after He had made His one offering, He entered the holiest place, never more to leave it as the Priests under the law left it, His offering being effectual to put away sins, and this, because of the admirableness of such a sacrifice as that rendered “without spot,” and “through the eternal Spirit,” and because this sacrifice met and satisfied God touching sin, answering and fulfilling “His will.” The Holy Ghost Himself, in revealing the new covenant, or God’s covenant, has established also the fact, that sins and iniquities are remembered no more.

Thus, under the teaching of the Apostle, the conscience is taught to deal with God, and the sinner exhorted to be happy in His love, and satisfied with His provisions—thus to enter the kingdom as a little child, not *reasoning* but *receiving*.

In John, we see living cases in which the Lord was dealing with the conscience; in Hebrews, we are taught in what way the conscience is to deal with the Lord, and how it is to reach the condition in which the conscience of Andrew, Nathanael, the Samaritan, the Adulteress, and the Beggar, were left by Jesus.

WE may walk so as to have ourselves in the presence of, or in company with, the Lord.

WE may act so as to bring our fellow-saints or fellow-sinners into His presence or into His company.

WE may be living so as to be keeping ourselves before our fellows or companions.

The first is the way of a worshipper.

The second is the activity of a true servant.

The third is the fruit of vanity and want of single-heartedness, and will surely keep us uncertain, without joy and strength, and prove a snare as well as bitterness in the latter end.

MAY we have Himself, not His truth merely! For there *is* a *difference*, and there *may be* a distance between these, as experience tells us. May we reach *Himself*, through reading, or ministry, or prayer, or communion! We need more *affection* and *attention*, that we may have Him *personally*.

THE JOURNEY TO SAMARIA.

JOHN IV.

WE are all attracted by the journey which the Prodigal takes from the distant land of his degradation and misery, home to his father's house, in Luke xv. It is a touching picture of the return which a sinner makes under the quickening and conduct of the Spirit, back to God, and then finding in Him a forgiving Father.

There is, however, another and a different journey described in Scripture, the co-relative, as I may call it, of the Prodigal's. I mean the journey of the Father out to the distant land after His prodigal. We read it in John iv.

Jesus who came from the Father in heaven, and represented the Father in this world of sinners, is there seen as making this journey. He goes into defiled Samaria, a figure of this polluted world; for Samaria was as a leper, separated from the place of righteousness, and treated as a thing outside the camp. But there, into that reprobate land, that native land of prodigals, the Lord goes. And He finds a sinner there, one who was still as with the swine in the fields of a stranger, feeding upon husks, unsatisfied.

The journey costs Him sore. He is weary, hungry, thirsty: and in the heat of the day seats Himself where this Prodigal was soon to join Him. And there, in the

presence of her need, He at once forgets His own, setting Himself to minister to her, in the patience that love will suffer, and with the skilfulness that love suggests.

He seeks her confidence in the most effectual, gracious manner. He asks her for a cup of cold water, the smallest of all favours known among the children of men. He would make her feel at ease in His presence; and she does so. But attracted by something that more interested her than the thirst of a stranger, *i.e.*, the novelty of the whole circumstance, He at once follows where she, under that attraction, was leading Him.

It is, however, after a Prodigal He has gone, and He can receive her and bless her in no other character. It was the ruined state of lost, revolted sinners He had come from heaven to relieve, and such only He can now have to do with, on the other side of the borders between Judea, the place of the sanctuary, and unclean Samaria.

But this woman of that unclean place, this Prodigal in the distant land, does not as yet know herself. He therefore sets Himself to teach her, to awaken her to her condition. And with what grace He does this. He would do all to spare her feelings, but He cannot spare her sin.

Surely we may say, if the journey which the Prodigal took towards home, in Luke xv., was beautiful, as being in due consistency with his condition as a convicted sinner, beautiful is this journey which the Father takes after the Prodigal in the considerate grace and patient love which give it character from first to last. Blessed is it to see in one of these journeys, the fruit of the hidden, effectual work of the Spirit in the soul of a

sinner, putting him on the road back to God in the only character in which God could receive him—and blessed it is to see in the other of these journeys, that grace which acts as from itself and in sovereignty, seeking and saving that which was lost, in the exercise of the most patient, skilful love, that was tender as far as faithfulness admitted.

And here let me add, for it is happy and edifying to be able to do so, that these two journeys, the one of the seeking Saviour, the other of the returning sinner, end in the same place, though they were taken as from opposite points, one *to*, the other *from*, the distant land. *Both end in the joy of the Father's house*—with, however, this distinguishing excellence in John iv. over Luke xv., that it is rather the joy of *the household* that is seen in Luke xv., but the joy of *the Father* (of the Lord Jesus, the witness of the Father in this world of sinners, as we noticed before, and as He Himself tells us) that is seen in John iv. “I have meat to eat which ye know not of,” are words which bespeak the joy of the Divine bosom over one that was dead but alive again, that was lost but now found; and which, as the Lord Himself intimates, lay quite beyond the measure of either disciples here, or angels in heaven.

But there is one feature which, above all others, gives the journey of the Father distinguishing excellence above that of the Prodigal, and it is this—that He had to prepare the Prodigal for His reception, while on the contrary, the Prodigal finds Him fully prepared for his.

This exceedeth.

The Prodigal, at the end of his journey in Luke xv.,

finds the Father quite prepared for him. Heart and house had a welcome for him. All his expectations were exceeded. His best thoughts had not measured the love that met him. Because of his return, the house was got ready at once to fill itself with a joy, the like of which it had never tasted or celebrated before.

The Father, however, in John iv., experiences something very different from this. As we have seen, the Lord Jesus has to prepare the poor prodigal Samaritan for His reception. He carried with Him the blessing into the distant land, but there He finds that He must get the heart and the conscience of His elect one ready for it. She was indisposed to admit it. She was not only ignorant of her need of it, but struggled with that conviction that was letting her know she could not do without it; and He has, in the lengthened and unwearying patience of grace, to sit over a rugged, reluctant material, and mould it into a vessel fit for the treasure He was bringing it.

Surely, I may again say, this exceedeth; and if the journey which the sinner takes under the quickening and guidance of the Spirit is beautiful, this journey which the Saviour takes, in the riches of His grace and the services of His love, is still more beautiful—or if we would rather leave them uncomparèd, we may let them lie together under our eye and before our heart, more attractive than the journeys which the starry glories of the sky perform in their appointed and mysterious orbits.

But how is grace magnified! All is grace—the house of the Father ready with a welcome for the Prodigal on his return, and the service of the Father (as we know

by the Son and Spirit) getting the Prodigal ready for the house !

Do we receive grace in each of these its ways, I ask ? Some may say, I know I am debtor to grace for the mind to return to God, and that teaches me to know myself a sinner, enabling me "to come to myself," like the Prodigal. Is it, then, I say, more to be doubted, that His house is ready to give you a welcome, than that He Himself (by His Son, His Word, and His Spirit) was ready to give you a mind to seek it ? Surely we may say, the grace that quickened us in the distant land of our willing exile, and made us to "come to ourselves," and learn our need of Him, the grace of that effectual, hidden work of the Spirit, applying truth and Jesus to our conscience, was of richer cost, and deeper, more marvellous character, than the grace that will open the home of glory to us, to receive us for ever. If we have known Him as in the distant land where our sins once brought Him, we may surely trust that He will know us in His own house where His grace is to bring us.

And there is still another thing supplied by the fourth of John to the fifteenth of Luke. I have already noticed, that in Luke, we witness the joy of the *household* after the Prodigal had actually returned home, and the household had been summoned and assembled—in John we read the fuller, deeper joy of the *Father* while He was still all alone, ere He had presented the lost and found one to the household.

But not only so ; the joy of the Prodigal in John iv., is of another character from what it is in Luke xv. In the latter, it is the silent satisfaction of the heart, in

thankful, believing, simple acceptance of blessing, the returned child sitting at the feast while the household make merry—in the former, it is the active joy of a soul perfectly in freedom, seeking, in somewhat of the grace she had received, to make others as happy as herself. And this, it may be, exceedeth also—or, again I say, if we like not to compare them, let the silent satisfaction of the Prodigal, and the active joy of the Samaritan, together tell us of the completeness of the blessedness which God prepares for us.

All that the Prodigal brought back with him, when he furnished himself for his long journey, was his sin, and the confession of it, and the ruin it had wrought for him; and all that the Samaritan was while Jesus sat with her, was a convicted sinner. But this was enough. The Father was on the neck of his convicted child, though still in rags and misery; and Jesus was revealing His glory, as He still sat in grace on one stone with her, to the woman of Samaria.

How these two precious scriptures combine, and yet complete each other! The two journeys, with the springs of them and the issues of them, let us into the glories and the ways of God in the Gospel of His grace and our salvation. “It is easy enough to us,” as one said years ago; “but it cost Him everything.” Wondrous, mighty fact! The rich One became poor, that the poor might be rich; the full One emptied Himself, that the empty might be filled; He that was the highest, stooped that we might be exalted; the Eternal Life was under death’s dominion, that dead sinners might live for ever!

SAMARIA.—GALILEE.—JUDEA.

JOHN IV., v.

How simple and important are those words found in this scripture, "Wilt thou be made whole?" (chap. v. 6.)

But their value will not be rightly prized, if we do not look carefully at the occasion that drew them forth.

The Lord was in Jerusalem. He was in the great centre and representative of human religiousness, and surrounded at that moment by its various provisions. It was the Sabbath. It was a Feast time in the city of solemnities. The ordinance, or angelic ministry of Bethesda was before Him, and multitudes lying around it. The Temple was at hand, and the Pharisees were all abroad.

In the midst of all these, speaking as they did the same language, and calling on man to be *religious*, the Lord plants Himself. But it is as a new thing, another thing than all that was there already, that He now appears. He does not notice the Feast, or the Sabbath, or the Temple. The ordinance He sets aside, and the Pharisees He provokes. His words went to cancel all, and bring in something entirely of another kind. "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man may at once free himself of all rivalry and resistance; he may cease

to look around for human aid ; he need wait no longer, nor doubt as to the long-desired blessing. It was there for him in Jesus without rivalry, without help from man, without delay, without doubt, without ordinance or angel. The only question was, Would he take the blessing from Jesus ? would he be debtor to Him ? would he stand by and see the salvation of God ? would he let God, in grace, work for him ?

What words indeed they were, in the midst of such a scene ! what affecting, weighty words ! They were a call from religiousness and its provisions and dependences, to faith and the provisions and sovereignty of grace.

This was in Judea. But there is Samaria and Galilee as well as Judea, and we must look at each of them.

These regions, morally, are very different. Samaria was the *defiled*, Galilee the *rational*, Judea the *religious*. These are the characteristic differences between them, as we see them in these chapters.

Samaria was the defiled, the outcast, the place without the camp, as we may say. It was a type of the world of sinners. It had no character to lose. But being such a place, it was just the place which the Son from the bosom came to visit, and in which He could exercise Himself.

Galilee was the rational, the proud, and the intellectual. The Lord's experience at Nazareth had already shown him the character of that country. It was a place where pride had prevailed over convictions, and where He had been refused, (however He might commend His authority to them,) because He was the Carpenter's Son. He had proved there, that a prophet had

no honour in his own country. (Luke iv.) He, therefore, rather tries another city in Galilee on this occasion, and He goes to Cana. But Cana is not Samaria to Him. There was *pretension* there. The Galileans receive Him because they had seen His miracles. They accredit Him for themselves, ere they accept Him. And nowhere is the pride of pretension more detected than in the intellectual world.

Judea was the religious. If Galilee were the intellectual world, Judea was the religious world. Though of a different kind, neither will do for the Son from the bosom. He had not come among men to vindicate or adopt them as religious, nor to educate and cultivate them as intellectual. His business was with *defiled* man, with man as a sinner, and pretension on man's part in any form will not do for Him.

There is amazing comfort for the soul, in seeing how the Lord was differently affected in these different regions.

In Samaria He sat on the well with one of the defiled nation; and afterwards abode for two days in the midst of a number of them. *Conscience* was stirred there, and He is therefore among them without reserve. There is no weight on His spirit. He was in His due place, the place which gave Him opportunity to act as from Himself, and to let it be learnt what He was, and for what He had come into this world. He found a *home* in Samaria, for He found stirred consciences, or contrite, humbled hearts there. (Isaiah lvii. 15.)

Towards Galilee He looked out with a weight upon

His spirit. (iv. 44.) Galilee was not that natural scene for the Divine Stranger to serve in, that Samaria was. He did not come here, as I said before, to educate and cultivate intellectual man. And therefore while we see Him taking His place at the Well of Sychar with all ease, and then dwelling for two days among the Samaritans as at home, here in Galilee He finds no home, and enters it with reserve. He ministers grace and power there, but it is without refreshment of spirit. He has no meat there which His disciples know not of. Samaria had provided that. Judea He has to test; rather, indeed, to cancel. Judea was the religious, as Galilee was the rational; Galilee had its pretensions, Judea its pre-occupations; and to Judea the Lord has to propose Himself as the end of the law, the substance of its shadows, the object of all its ordinances, and the One that was to take the place of all that was there. He takes His stand at the side of Bethesda, and simply says to the impotent man, "Wilt thou be made whole?" He would be accepted as the end of all ordinances, the life and power of all the institutions of the city of solemnities. He is personally doing what the Apostle doctrinally is doing in the Epistle to the Hebrews, substituting Himself in the place of all the provisions of the Mosaic or Levitical dispensation. He entered Samaria freely, Galilee with reserve; but in Judea, He found no place at all. The Sabbath, the Pool, the Temple, the Feasts were there before Him, and He is challenged as an intruder, and has to withdraw.

All this turns to our comfort. We learn from it what Jesus is, and we find Him out to our comfort. It is when our *necessities* welcome Him, as in Samaria, that

He gives us His presence; it is when our *pretensions* are made, whether they be intellectual or religious, that we, either wholly or in part, lose Him. The Lord at the well of Sychar and at the pool of Bethesda shows Himself differently.

And let me add, that as we *begin*, so we must *go on* with the Lord, as *sinner*s, as Samaritans, with exercised consciences. If we let go conscience and take up intellect, if we part with a broken heart, and take up religiousness, if we leave Samaria for either Galilee or Judea, communion with Jesus will fail. For Jesus left *home*, when He left *Samaria*, and found no other in either Galilee or Judea.

Surely, then, we see these regions to be morally divers, and the blessed Lord to be related to each of them in divers ways. *Conscience* was stirred in Samaria, and no miracle asked for; and there Jesus was at home. *Mind* rather than conscience was exercised in Galilee, and miracles were the ground of faith; and there Jesus did a deed of grace and power, but did not dwell. *Religion* shut Him out from Judea.

Does not all this tell us about Jesus to our comfort? Wretched, self-ruined, corrupted child of nature, the Son of God will approach, but *pretension* in no form will do for Him. It may be intellectual pretension that discusses Him and weighs Him in its own balances—it may be religious pretension, which still trusts its doings in spite of the offers of His grace; but neither will do for Him who came into a scene of ruins, just because it was ruins, foul, black, leprous, uncleansable ruins. Let the sinner be the sinner, Jesus will approach him, for He came to seek

and to save him—but let man pretend or assume, Jesus must be reserved.

It is a sweet meditation to go along these priceless chapters, and make these discoveries of the Son of God. We may *study* Him, profoundly study Him, when we have Him *thus* before us; for it is heart and conscience, and not the mind merely, that will then sit at the lesson.

With all this, however, I must put one other thing forth—“the mode the Lord took with the defiled Samaritan, thus to get for Himself a *home* there.” As He came both to *seek* and to *save*, this scene shows Him to us both *seeking* and *saving*.

She was a child of nature, ruined, polluted nature. Her heart knew nothing beyond the ordinary enjoyments and occupations of every-day life.

The Lord begins by *inviting her confidence*. And this He does in the skilfulness of love, seeking a favour at her hand.

He *acquires* the confidence He sought. She feels at ease in His presence.

He then *uses* the confidence He had gained, for her good. He awakens the curiosity of the one He had gained. He uses such a form of words, as lets her feel, that it is no ordinary person she has encountered. She takes up the word “Sir,” showing that her soul had been arrested and fixed. And having thus gained both her confidence and her attention to Himself as no common person, He uses His advantages still for her, but with faithfulness to her present condition. He *addresses Himself to her conscience*; and after a very

short delay, He gets it, exposing her to herself, for her confusion and amazement.

Thus He has acquired her *confidence*, her *attention*, and her *conscience*. But there is much more. She struggles, and would fain hide again—as Adam of old. A question about worship shall do for her what the trees of the garden did for him. But He *follows her into her covert*, and answers her inquiry in such a form of words, as seems only to fix the attention of her soul more deeply upon Him, and awakens her wonder more earnestly, so that she would almost identify Him with the promised Messiah.

He, then, stands revealed to her. This, however, is for her *satisfaction*; as before she had stood revealed to herself, by His words, for her *confusion*.

She leaves Him, and the disciples return; but they learn from Him, that their provisions were now unneeded. He had sent away a poor sinner happy, and *this was meat and drink and rest to Him*.

What secrets are disclosed in these things of Samaria, Galilee, and Judea, and what methods of grace in these dealings with the woman!

As to her, the Lord *seeks*, and then *saves*. He sought the confidence of a sinner—then fixed her soul's attention on Himself—then exposed her to herself, and finally, revealed Himself to her in light and joy and liberty—and when the whole process is over, He takes more joy in the issue of it, than she did herself!

This is the Jesus we have to do with, and whom it is our privilege, as it is our duty, to study.

He can find a home, among us on this earth, only in the poor sinner that with broken heart deals with Him

—and such a home as this He must get for Himself by the inworking power of His Spirit. We find a sample of all this here. The prophet, I may say, had sketched or anticipated this, in Isaiah lvii., 15-19. But all this tells us of the Saviour we have found. His different experience in Samaria, Galilee, and Judea, tells us that He gets a home *only* in the midst of broken-hearted sinners; and His dealing with the woman shows us *how* He gets that home for Himself.

BETHESDA.

JOHN v.

THE Lord is seen occasionally at Jerusalem, in John ; but not so in the other Gospels. But unlike what He is in Galilee, where thousands followed Him, in Jerusalem He is a solitary man—as we may observe in John ii., iii., v., vii., viii., ix., x.

At His last entrance into the city, I mean by the road from Jericho, through Bethany and the Mount of Olives, which is recorded by all the Evangelists, I know He is followed by a multitude—but that is no exception to what we have observed, that He was a solitary man in Jerusalem ; though in the midst of thousands, when in the parts of Galilee and around all the shores of the lake of Tiberias.

In John, too, the Feasts are treated as though they were by-gone elements. They are spoken of much in the way that St. Paul in his Epistles would speak of Mount Sinai or the legal ordinances. They are called, in this Gospel, “the feasts of the Jews”—ii., v., vi., vii.—save indeed in xiii. 1, where the Passover of that day is honoured by our Evangelist, as a divinely-instituted Feast, because the Lord was then about to fulfil it, as the true Paschal-Lamb.

These are peculiarities in John, and very characteristic of *this*—that in John, the Lord is at the end

of His question with the Jew, and is standing as among sinners, disowned by the world that was made by Him, and rejected by His people to whom He had offered Himself. See chap. i., 10, 11.

It is in perfect and consistent wisdom that the Spirit of God has not told us what Feast this was which had now drawn the Lord to Jerusalem. It mattered not which of them it was; for He was about to show Himself in the city of the Jews, the city of the Feasts and solemnities of that people, as One that would supersede them all, and all that belonged to them. So that, we have not only *a Feast* there on this occasion, but we have *the Sabbath-day*, and *the religious rulers* of the people, *the Temple*, and this singular and wonderful *ordinance* of Bethesda, all before us in this scene.

This Pool by the sheep-market at Jerusalem, or Bethesda, was a certain provision made in *the grace* of God in the behalf of His people at Jerusalem. The system established in Israel did not provide it. *It was extraordinary and occasional*—as the raising up of a Judge or a Prophet had been in earlier days, or the mission of an Angel, now and again, as to a Gideon or a Manoah. So, the stirring of this pool. But withal, it was a testimony to the fact, that there were resources of mercy and of power in the God of Israel for His people, beyond all that was then ordinarily dispensed to them. Its very name intimated this; Bethesda, “house of mercy.” And as being this, it was a pledge to Israel of Messiah. It told of Him beforehand, as ordinances and prophets had done.

But—Jesus beside the Pool of Bethesda, as we see in this chapter, is a sight that, in the spirit of Moses at

the Bush, we may well turn aside to see. If He had, of old, been reflected in that water, He stands there now to dry it up. Nay more. He stands in contrast with it.

This sight reminds me of the Epistle to the Hebrews. There, the Apostle sets the Lord Jesus beside the ordinances of the Law, as here the Lord sets Himself beside the Pool close by the sheep-market, which was as one of them. And the same thing takes place here in John v. as in that Epistle.

There was a witness to Christ in each of these. Bethesda bore witness to Him; the ordinances of the Law did the same. But, let Jesus stand beside the Pool, or be brought beside the ordinances of the Law, we shall find contrast to be as strong as similitude. We have but to listen to the Lord here, and to the Spirit in the Apostle there, in order to learn this clearly and fully.

“Wilt thou be made whole?” was the only word which the Lord took with Him when He addressed the poor cripple at that place. Was he ready to put himself, just as he was, into His hand? Was he willing to be His debtor? Could he trust himself, with his need and infirmity, alone with Jesus? This was all. And surely this, in its simplicity, is in complete and full contrast with the cumbrous, weighty machinery of Bethesda. No rivalry, no delay, no uncertainty, no help sought and rendered, are here as they are there. Here with Christ it is, “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life.” It is, “Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.” But neither of these voices, nor any thing like them, is

heard from the troubled bosom of that strange, mysterious water. The Angel that stirred it at certain seasons had never awakened such sounds as these.

“Wilt thou be made whole?” Simple, and weighty, and full of consolation!

The Lord was then in Jerusalem. He was in the great centre and representative of human religiousness, surrounded at that moment by its rich and various provisions. It was the Sabbath. It was a feast-time. The city of solemnities was in one of its palmy hours. The Temple was at hand, the Pharisees were around, and a great multitude of expectants and votaries gathered about the Pool by the sheep-market, the ordinance or angelic ministry of Bethesda. In the midst of all this He stands. But it is as a new thing, another thing. He takes no notice of the feast-day, nor of the Sabbath, nor of the Temple. His words sound as though they pronounced the doom of all these. “Wilt thou be made whole?” was their funeral knell. The poor cripple whom they addressed may at once free himself whether of rivals or of friends. Those who might have struggled with him, or those who might have aided him, he may now equally overlook. And he need not wait. Delay and hope may be exchanged for present enjoyment. He need neither doubt nor tarry. Ordinances and angels and helpers and rivals, delay and uncertainty, all were thus blessedly and gloriously disposed of by Jesus in his behalf. When Jesus appeared, when the Son of God stood beside this Pool, the only question was, would the poor cripple leave all for Him, and in that way stand by and see the salvation of God.

What a word was this, in the midst of such a scene, and at such a moment! "Wilt thou be made whole?"

The poverty of the Pool is exposed. It is seen to be but as a "beggarly element." It has no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. And after this same manner, the Spirit exposes "the worldly sanctuary," and all its provisions and services, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. There the Apostle, under the Holy Ghost, sets Jesus again beside Bethesda, beside the system of ordinances that had gone before, and exposes them all in their poverty and impotency. There had been a reflection of Christ in these ceremonies of the Temple, as there had been in this water by the sheep-market; but the reflection had no substance—it was a shadow—and it was gone when the true light filled the place. Jesus alone is glorified. When the Spirit brings Him in, in that Epistle, He keeps Him in, saying of Him, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." And here, the Lord Himself speaks to the poor cripple of nothing but of His own healing power—"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." He was to carry that which once, while he was hanging over the Pool, bore him. He needed nothing else. He knew the healing of the Son of God, and he was free.

Thus it might have been with him. He represents this to us. But, perhaps, he was but an unconscious type of the way of the Son of God with sinners. For, personally, he does not seem to enter into the scene. Instead of being abstracted and fixed by the Lord, instead of looking up in the Stranger's face with wonder and delight at the words addressed to him, and at once transferring himself, just as he was, in

all his sorrow and need, into His hand, he talks of his present condition. Natural this is, I know; done every day; the common way of man. We need not wonder at it, nor that this man was afterwards found in the Temple, instead of being, like the Samaritan leper of Luke xvii., at the feet of his Deliverer. These are but the ways and workings of the legal, religious mind, whether in Judea or in Christendom; for it has no ear for the proposals of grace. And again I say, we need not wonder at this one man, this cripple that was healed, when we see at that moment "a great multitude of impotent folk" lingering round that uncertain, disappointing Pool, though the Son of God was abroad in the land, carrying with Him and in Him salvation without money and without price, without doubt or delay, for all who would come to Him; and that, too, in defiance of all hindrance or rivalry, and independent of all help or countenance.

All this reads us a lesson. Indeed it does. The Pool thickly frequented, Jesus passing by unheeded! The Pool sought unto, while Jesus has to seek, and propose Himself! What a picture of the religion of the heart of man! Ordinances, with all their cumbersome machinery, waited on; the grace of God that brings salvation slighted! or at least, this grace has to propose itself, to be preached and pressed, like Jesus at Bethesda, while these ordinances, like that Pool, are crowded by willing votaries every day.

But further. This Pool has its neighbourhood, as well as itself, for our inspection—the scene has its accompaniments or its accidents for our further instruction.

We read here, "And on the same day was the Sabbath."

In the other Gospels, when the Lord is challenged for doing His work on such a day, He answers either from the case of David eating the shew-bread; or from the Priests doing work in the Temple; or from a word of the Prophets, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice;" or from the fact that they themselves, His accusers, would lead out their ass or their ox, on the Sabbath, to watering. But here, on this occasion, in John's Gospel, being challenged on this same ground of healing on such a day, He says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Wondrous sentence! But let me first notice, how characteristic of John it is. The Lord does not here, as in the other Gospels, on like occasions, as we have just seen, put himself in company with David, or with the Priests, or with the words of the Prophets, or with the ways, the common accredited ways of men, but with God. It is not what David had once done, nor what the Priests would do, nor what men, even His accusers themselves, were doing every day, but what the Father had ever been doing in this needy, ruined world, that the Lord pleads as the standard of His actings. And on the distinguished occasion then before Him, restoring the cripple at the Pool of Bethesda, He had given a sample of this.

This is full of character. But surely, it is full of wonder too. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Man at the beginning forfeited the Sabbath. By sinning he broke the rest of creation. He lost the

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garden, and became a drudge in the earth, that he might get bread by sweat of face, and live. But when man thus lost his rest, the Lord God left His, and at once began to work again.

He had hallowed the seventh day, in memory of His having finished His creation-work. He rested then. And having rested, He enjoyed His rest, walking with the creature whom His hand had made in His own image, after His likeness, in the garden which He had formed and furnished for him. But when sin entered, and the Creation-Rest was gone, the Lord God not only began at once to work, but to work for His self-ruined creature—as we read, “The Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them,” clothed the man and the woman, who had now reduced themselves to the condition of guilty, exposed sinners.

Wondrous display of God! The glorious Framer of the heavens and the earth, the One whose fingers had just garnished the sky above us, and whose creatures were filling and furnishing the ground we tread on, now turns His hand (to His praise be it remembered for ever) to make a covering for a sinner. God in grace, the Father of our Lord Jesus, thus began to work. And so, onward through Old Testament days, He was active in love, showing mercy. He was not enjoying His Rest as Creator of a finished work, but working, in grace, in the midst of ruins, on new-creation principles, as Patriarchs and Prophets and Israel, and the ordinances of the Law, and this very Pool of Bethesda had, in their several ways and seasons, been witnessing. And now, on this model, Christ had come forth to work—as the healed cripple of this chapter witnesses. So

that, standing at the margin of this mystic water, and with the healed man before Him, He could say, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

Wondrous! The Rest was left, and work was recommenced. The Pillar of the wilderness was "a like figure" of this. After leaving Egypt, Israel forfeited the Rest of Canaan which had been promised them, and out to which they had gone, and on to which they were journeying. And they had to wander outside of that Rest, for forty years. But the Cloudy Pillar, or rather the Glory that dwelt in it, would be a wanderer also. If Israel, like Adam, had forfeited their rest, the Lord God of Israel would fain be without His. And thus the Cloud went about with the Camp, rehearsing again the Divine grace of the Lord God at the beginning. The God of Israel was as the God of creation had been—for He "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

The Gospel is a great system of working as by Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And on the authority of what has been done, on the title of what God Himself has wrought in the accomplished redemption of sinners, Jesus, in the Gospel, still turns to guilty, helpless man, and says to each and to all, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Surely the sequel is well weighed. Bethesda reflects the Son of God, the Saviour. The house of mercy, and the Lord and Dispenser of mercy, are in company. But while it *reflects* Him in its measure, it *sets Him off* in somewhat larger measure. It causes the glory and the riches of His grace to shine forth the brighter because of its own faint and dark ground—and as in the Mosaic ordinances, so in this Pool at the sheep-

market, we have Him as much by contrast as by similitude.

Let me add, as a reflection upon this Pool near the sheep-market, that the relief which grace provided, in the age of the Law, was only *occasional*; as I have already noticed; as by a Judge or a Prophet—and as also the Angel stirring this water now and again, witnessess. But now, in this age of the Gospel, grace or the salvation of God is *the standing thing*, the thing ministered. “This is the day of salvation.” And yet, I doubt not, there are special or occasional seasons of the Spirit’s peculiar working and visitation. There are “times of visitation” now, as there had been of old; though it be fully true, that the present is a dispensation of grace, as the former had not been. The city of Corinth had such a time vouchsafed to it, as Jerusalem had before it. (Luke xix. 44; Acts xviii. 10.) Individuals, likewise, have such times, (1 Pet. ii. 12)—and indeed if Bethesda witnessed this at Jerusalem in other days, times of Revival, as we call them, have witnessed the same in course of the age of Christendom.

PETER IN JOHN XXI.

It is not so much the sense of what we were, when in our sins and unconverted, as the recollection of what we have been since we knew the Lord, our coldness and short-comings, and ways of selfishness since then, that interferes with that full, hearty welcome of His presence and of the hope of being soon with Him, which we ought to carry. But all this is legal. It belongs to nature. The Divine argument in Romans v. is opposed to this. (verses 8, 9.) And Peter in this chapter illustrates a rebuke of it.

Very much in his recollection, as a saint, might well have made him a coward, dreading the presence of the Lord. But he was not a coward. As soon as he heard that his Master, denied though He had been by his lying and profane lips, stood on the shore, he tucked his fisher's coat about him, and got overboard into the water, to reach Him as fast as he could. For if he had recollections of himself, he had also knowledge of his Lord—and this was the secret of his soul, and the spring of his courage.

Had Peter been *ignorant* of Christ, or known Him simply after the dictates of nature, of flesh and blood, he would have run away in fear—had he been but *partial* in acquaintance with Him, he would have had his fears and suspicions, and allowed his companions

in the boat to reach the Lord before him, so that they might be a kind of veil to break the force of His presence upon his spirit. But Peter *knew Him well*. He knew Him in love—and therefore he neither ran away, nor did he hide himself behind his companions, but met His presence singly.*

Peter knew the Lord. That was everything to him. To be sure it was. And he, being dead, yet speaketh to us. He says, "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace," as all Scripture does.

And so, I may say, the Mary Magdalene of the preceding chapter, John xx., acted from like knowledge of her Lord. For sinner as she was, she had been introduced to Him in her sins, yea, and by her sins, having had seven devils cast out of her by Him; and now she speaks as though she were entitled to claim Him and take Him *entirely to herself*. "Tell me," said she, as to the gardener, "where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." *He was all her own*.

What precious affection! What a sense of our title to Him! How should it be thus with each one of us; each of us knowing our own personal, individual claim and right to a whole Christ in all His fulness, our title to *Himself*!

And it is faith, and faith only, that does this. For, faith acquaints us with *Him*, conscience with *ourselves*. This latter makes us cowards—rightly so—the other gives us happy, holy boldness. Conscience had already

* Such was Adam's knowledge of the Lord God, when he came forth from his guilty covert in Genesis iii.—with this difference; Adam did so as a sinner, under a revelation of the Gospel; Peter, as a saint, under acquaintance with the Lord.

set Peter on a journey, when he went from the palace of the high priest, and there outside in shame and loneliness, wept bitterly. Faith set him on this present journey, when he left the boat to reach his Lord on the shore. Neither the *moral* sense of man, nor his *religious mind*, nor a general thought of *mercy*, would have been capable of setting him on such a road. It was faith—knowledge of Christ in love—and that is faith. Faith in God, not as a Judge, but as a Saviour, is faith—faith in Him as giving, not as enjoining or demanding. Conscience may act, and does act, as the *security* of communion with God—for we cannot, dare not, walk with Him, save in company with its testimony—but it is never the *power* or the *measure* of it. Communion must be the fruit of faith, which takes knowledge of God according to His revelation of Himself in grace and salvation.

And, oh, what a thing it is, to know God in love! to have communion with Christ as the lover of our souls! to dwell in love and thus to dwell in God! to know and believe the love that God has to us! How blessed! And this is the dear and precious result of the Gospel in the *heart*—peace is the result of it in the *conscience*. To introduce heart and conscience to these their rights, through grace, in the Gospel, is one of the fruits and purposes of the revelation which God has made of Himself.

And in this case of Peter in John xxi., according to this, the Lord, in a further stage of the action, puts Himself in company with both the *conscience* and the *faith* of His saint. He acts with Peter's conscience, by putting him through a bitter exercise of soul by

three challenges, and thus letting him know, that he had indeed sinned in his renewed denials of Him. But He puts Himself also in company with Peter's faith, by giving him the rich and abundant fruit of that faith, bringing him again into near and full fellowship with Himself, (as faith in Peter had already done,) and putting on him the favour of being the one, among them all, for specially feeding and guiding His flock.

Grace surely always after this manner, warrants and seals the conclusions of faith. The Lord does not again put Peter through the process of taking the sentence of death into himself as a sinner, as He had done with him in Luke v., where they had been together for the first time at the sea of Galilee with a miraculous draught of fishes. No. He simply restores his soul, or washes his feet, and then gives him his precious place of nearness to Himself, and more than faith itself would have reckoned on.

And let me just add, it is this communion of Peter with his Lord we need more abundantly, if one may speak for others. It is not taking knowledge of Him in judgment and righteousness—it is not dealing with Him in His counsels and revelations, or the things that concern Him. These will be right, and are not to be neglected. But to know Him *in His love*, that is faith. And that is of God, of the inworking and witnessing of the Spirit. It is above nature. Yea, it is further away from communion with Him in judgment and in righteousness, than that is from a state of carelessness and unbelief. Conscience, the moral sense, the religious mind, the general thought of our need of His mercy, as

I have said already, may give us place before Him in judgment, and we may be rightly humbled by that; but that is not far removed from nature. But to know Him in love, with a sense of our title to *Himself*, this is of God, and far away from nature. Peter in the fifth of Luke was not Peter in the twenty-first of John—though I surely know that the drawing of the Spirit, through Divine conviction, was with him then.

Ruth was open-hearted and self-surrendering in the first chapter, when she cast in her lot with her afflicted mother-in-law. She was duly obedient to her when, in the second chapter, she went as a Gleaner in the rich man's field; and there beautifully, as under the hand of God, she carried herself before him, accepting his bounty humbly and thankfully. But she was far more than all this in the third chapter, when she consented to lay herself at his feet on the threshing-floor, and claim him for her husband. This was faith. A soul may be kind-hearted to others, and humble and reverent before God, and still in nature—but to count upon the love of Christ, to claim it, to know one's title to it, to use and enjoy it, to find an object in Him and to receive it as a fact that He has found an object in us, this is above nature. This is blessedness of the very highest order, given us of the Spirit; glorifying of God, and heaven to ourselves.

For Ruth to pass from the threshing-floor at the feet of Boaz, to his house and his table and the place of mistress of his servants and sharer of his wealth and of himself, was easy, natural, and necessary—but to pass from the gleaning-field to the threshing-floor was a

journey that could have been taken (like this of Peter in John xxi.) only under conduct of the Holy Ghost drawing by the cords of love. To call the Lord no more "Baali," but "Ishi," this is faith indeed.

THE SON OF MAN IN HEAVEN.

ACTS I.—IX.

THE second of St. Luke's letters to his friend Theophilus, does not stiffly and formally take up the inspired narrative, where the first of them had left it; there is rather an easy and graceful intertwining or intervolving of the two: the second going back a little into the scenes and the seasons which closed the first, giving them the same general character with a few faint distinguishing features. But each of these letters, "the Gospel by Luke," and "the Acts of the Apostles," has of course, as I need not say, its own proper subject.

In the early chapters of the second of them, that is, of "the Acts of the Apostles," and to which I am now, for a little, addressing myself, we get an account of Jesus as *Man glorified in the heavens*; as in the early chapters of the first of them we got an account of *God manifest in flesh on the earth*. I mean, this is characteristic, severally, of each of them. The Person is, surely, one and the same in both; the God-Man.

We learn many things connected with the Son of Man in heaven, from the Evangelists, where that mystery is anticipated now and again. The Lord Himself tells us that He is to be seen there by faith all through this present age, seated at the right hand of power; and

that in due time He will come forth from thence in the clouds of heaven. (Matt. xxvi. 64.) He tells us also, that when He has come forth, He will sit on the throne of His glory. (Matt. xxv. 31.) These are but mere samples of the way in which this great mystery was thus anticipated. But the Person seen in the Evangelists is God manifested in the flesh, and as such in action on the earth. In these chapters in the Acts, which succeeds the Evangelists, it is, on the other hand, Man glorified in heaven, and acting there.

In chapter i., Jesus of Nazareth, who was God manifest in flesh here, is seen ascending the heavens.

In chapter ii., the promised Spirit is given, and Peter begins his preaching by taking this gift, according to the prophecy of Joel, as his text. And after reciting it, he says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, *a man* approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." And he then shows, from the sixteenth and one hundred and tenth Psalms, that this Man thus approved of God on earth, was now raised from the dead and glorified at the right hand of God in heaven.

Thus the mystery is established, the mystery of the Son of Man, Jesus of Nazareth, exalted in the heavens. Then, as the Evangelists had already looked at Jesus as He walked, and ministered, and toiled, and suffered here on earth, so now in his preaching in this and in the following chapters, Peter gives us some of the ways

and virtues of this same Jesus now ascended into heaven.

Thus, in this same chapter ii., with Joel still as his text, he tells us, that He is the *God* mentioned in that prophecy, who has now sent down the Spirit. According to Joel, therefore, it is the God of Israel who does this great Pentecostal wonder; according to Peter, it is the Man now in heaven that does it.

This is surely a magnificent way in which to begin the story of the virtues and glories of Jesus of Nazareth, now glorified on high at God's right hand; where also Peter declares Him to be seated, till the day come for making His foes His footstool, as the "My Lord," of the hundred and tenth Psalm. And then, on the authority of these things, he calls the whole house of Israel, to own the once crucified Man to be both Lord and Christ. And when a number of his hearers are aroused by this preaching, he publishes to them the virtue of "the name" of this glorified One, that it can secure eternal life and the gift of the Spirit to all sinners who receive it.

Then, in chapter iii., this same Apostle tells us several other great things of Jesus in the heavens—that it was His name, through faith in it, that had just healed the lame Beggar at the gate of the Temple—that He was the Prophet promised by Moses in Deuteronomy xviii.—that the heavens are now retaining Him, but that He is again to leave them in due season, and to bring times of refreshing and the restitution of all things, with Him back to the earth.

Then, in chapter iv., he preaches through this same Jesus, "the resurrection from the dead"—and further

proclaims, that He was "the Head of the corner," according to Psalm cxviii., and the only One set of God for salvation in this guilty world. And toward the close of this chapter, he and his fellow-saints at Jerusalem lay the name of this same Jesus before the Lord God, the Maker of the heaven and the earth, as all their confidence and title to blessing.

Then, in chapter v., Peter and the other Apostles testify in the face of the Jewish council, that this same blessed One whom they had slain and hanged on a tree, God had exalted with His right hand to be both a Prince and a Saviour, everything indeed to Israel, whether for blessing or government.

After these manners, in the course of this preaching, we get a large and varied testimony to the Man in heaven. Well may it follow the ineffably weighty and blessed testimony of the Evangelists to the Son of the Father, God manifest in flesh, on earth. But here, with this fifth chapter, the Apostolic *testimony* under the given Spirit ends. We pass from it to a *vision*. For after this hearing about the glorified Man, we are given, for a little moment, a *sight* of Him. Peter had been preaching Him, Stephen is now to see Him. They are alike witnesses, though in different ways, to the same great mystery, that the Son of Man was in heaven at the right hand of God. Stephen is borne by wicked men outside the city to be stoned, while his face is shining like that of an angel; and his eye is opened, and he looks up to and within an opened heavens, and there sees the glory of God, and Jesus, "the Son of Man," standing at the right hand of God.

Thus is the Man in heaven testified by the eye of

Stephen as He had been by the lips of Peter. The Spirit fills the one with an inspired tale about Him, and God opens the eye of the other with a glorious sight of Him. But the object is the same—the glorified Man, the Son of Man in heaven, Jesus of Nazareth at the right hand of the majesty on high—the One, who having been “God manifest in the flesh” here, humbled, serving, crucified, buried, and raised again, was now in His Manhood exalted to the highest place of honour there.

One thing, however, still remains in the revelation of this great mystery. In chapter ix., this glorified Man comes down from heaven, and shows Himself, for a little moment, here on earth. In holy, peaceful glory, and in the attitude of one that was receiving him to Himself with a blissful and perfect welcome, He had just been seen, as in His due place in heaven, by *His suffering saint*. But now, in terrible majesty, in the burning brightness of judicial glory, He is seen by *the persecutor of His saint*, here on earth. He thus appears as One ready and all-powerful to avenge the blood of His slaughtered flock. Mercy indeed shall rejoice over judgment in the present case, and the persecutor shall become a Witness and an Apostle; but the vision tells us, that the Man in heaven waits there, as in other characters, so in this, the Avenger, in due time, of the wrongs done in the earth. This is so, and this is here pledged and foreshadowed. For we know that Jesus has ascended in various characters. He has ascended as to His native place, the glory He had with the Father ere the world was—He has ascended to prepare mansions in the Father’s house for the elect—He has

ascended as their Forerunner—He has ascended to sit in the God-pitched Tabernacle as our High Priest—He has ascended as the Author and Finisher of faith, and as the Purger of sins—but He has ascended also to take His place as Adonai at the right hand of Jehovah, till He make His foes His footstool. And this last character He must return to earth to fulfil, as now He comes down to the road which lay between Jerusalem and Damascus to give, as it were, a sample of this, and to put the sentence of death in this persecuting Saul of Tarsus.

PAUL AT MILETUS.

ACTS xx.

WE have, in the progress of Scripture, several instances of dying saints and servants of God taking leave of the scene here, and of their ministry in it. Jacob does so—and so Moses and Joshua and David. And among them Samuel also, in a very affecting scene recorded in 1 Samuel xii.

In this chapter, the Apostle Paul is in the like condition. He is taking leave of his ministry on the shore at Miletus, in the presence of the Ephesian Elders.

Paul's story in the Book of the Acts consists of two parts—his service and his sufferings—or, in the one, we see Paul the *servant* of Jesus; in the other, Paul the *prisoner*.

The first part ends with this twentieth chapter, having begun, I may say, with the thirteenth. The second ends with the book itself, having begun with the twenty-first.

That, however, which attracts me at this time is Paul in this chapter in contrast with the Lord Jesus in like conditions, in John xiii.-xvii. For there the Lord is taking leave of His ministry in the presence of the Twelve, as here the Apostle is doing the same in the presence of the Elders of the Church at Ephesus.

There are points of contrast very vividly presented to us, and the *human* in its best conditions stands beside

that which was *Divine as well as human*; and the distinctions are finely maintained and expressed.

But this is only what we would have reckoned upon. We are instinctively conscious that Paul, the brightest, highest sample of a vessel of God anointed and filled by the Spirit, stands before the affections and recollections of the heart very differently from the Lord. Our love to him is that which we give to a fellow-creature, and that only—the love that we give to the Lord Jesus is a *worshipping* love. This we feel instinctively. We need not to be taught this. We know it—and thus we carry in the sensibilities of our renewed mind the witness of that which Scripture tells us, that Jesus was God as well as man, and that the most gifted vessel in God's house, though he be also the most self-surrendering saint, is still but a fellow-creature.

The contrast which these Scriptures afford, (the Lord in a parting hour, and Paul in a parting hour,) gives us a sample and illustration of all this, and re-seals the conclusions of our souls already reached and rested in, as I have said, instinctively.

The points of contrast may be thus noticed. 1. The Apostle *submits his ministry to the judgment of his Brethren*. He tells them of the humility and tears with which he had conducted it; and then of his diligence in it, how he had taught them both publicly and as from house to house, and in his preaching how he had embraced both Jews and Gentiles. And all this is sweet in him, and well becomes him. He treats them as fellows in the service of God, and submits his own peculiar measure and manner of service to them, as they might do with him.

But I ask is this the style of the Lord Jesus? Does He, after this manner, submit His work to the approval of men? In the chapters I have referred to, we do not see Him doing this even with His Father. He is there rather delivering up His ministry as now accomplished. "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do," is His language, while His eyes are toward heaven, and His voice is addressed to the Father there. He delivers up an accomplished work, a work which He knew Himself was all perfect. This was His glory, as a minister, His glory in His ministry. In the stead of submitting it to the approval of His Apostles, He rather, as I have said, delivers up His work as that which had been accomplished, and accomplished to perfection.*

2. Paul tells the Ephesian Elders that he was going on his way, bound in spirit, to Jerusalem, but that *he did not know what was to happen to him*, beyond what the Holy Ghost had witnessed, that bonds and imprisonment awaited him.

Was this the Lord, again I ask? Why, the very opposite shows itself in Him? When He was taking leave of His ministry and of His servants, He lets them know that He knew all things, things near and things afar off, things in heaven and things on earth, the story of the world's enmity and of the sufferings of the righteous in it; and the story of eternity itself; for He tells them also, that He will return to take His people home with Him to be in the Father's house, there to abide

* So, in due time, He "delivers up the kingdom." (1 Cor. xv.) Now having served as a Witness, and by-and-by, when He shall have served as a King, still it is perfect He is in each. He *delivers up* His stewardship as one that had been faithful.

for ever. Surely this is the glory of the Lord again; and bearing witness of the One with whom we are conversing in John xiii.-xvii.

3. Again—the Apostle tells his companions, that however largely and intimately he may have been with them hitherto, he was now about to leave them, and that *they would see him no more*.

But what says the Lord in contrast with this? Paul could say nothing more, I grant. He, as a man, a fellow-creature, about speedily to close his career and his service here by death, had but to say, “You will see my face no more.” But again I ask, does the Lord say this? Quite the contrary. He lets His servants know, that He would never cease to see them, and they should never cease to see Him. “Because I live, ye shall live also,” He says to them. “The world seeth me no more, but ye see me.” And so should it be for ever. He would return to them and for them, that He might be with them. They should see Him in spirit till that time came; and then in glory, as with Him in the Father’s house, for ever.

What outshining is here! Paul could not speak in loftier language than he did; Jesus could not speak in lower strain than He did. It is the creature and God—it is the sweet, attractive, loving form of human companionship—it is the irradiation of personal Divine glory.

4. Then again, we listen to the Apostle *caring not for prison or for death*. And fine this is. It may humble us to find such a self-sacrificing faith in another. Paul laid his life on the altar, and was ready to have it offered up. But when we listen, in His turn, to the

Lord Jesus, we hear the language of One who was going, as He knew, back to the Father in glory, because He had already glorified God and the Father on earth. Paul would blessedly brace himself for that which remained of the conflict and the journey, but Jesus was at the end of it in the conscious perfection of One who had so glorified God in the world here, as gave Him His place and His title of being glorified with God in the heavens.

5. And we further find the Apostle *giving counsel* to his Brethren. And seasonable and right counsel it was. It could not be more just and fit, we may say. It was this—to *serve God* in His Church, and to look to themselves, for dangers were at hand.

But what do we find in Christ corresponding to this? He counsels His Apostles too—and various are His words to them. But among them He tells them that they shall bear witness to Him. And He tells them that the Holy Ghost, who is about to come from heaven, shall also bear witness to Him, and serve the glory of His name by taking of His things and showing them to them.

What infinite and yet due distance is there here? Could Paul tell the Ephesian Elders any thing like this? Could he, would he, dare he, make himself their object, when he was absent from them? Was he to be their subject? He tells them, and rightly so, to serve God and look to themselves. But without robbery, Jesus puts Himself in company with God and the Father, making Himself together with the Father the object of the Holy Ghost's testimony, and of the Apostles' ministry.

Surely, in each and every feature of this contrast, the glory of One who was infinitely above the first of the mere children of men shines out. It all confirms the instinctive impressions of our own souls, telling us that with Jesus, but with Jesus alone, of all the sons of men, are we in conscious converse with the living God Himself, with One whom we worship as well as love.

6. Still, however, there is more of this.

Paul *commits his Brethren and companions to God and to the word of His grace*. What more could he do? But what does the Lord do, in like conditions, leaving behind Him his apostles and saints, as Paul was leaving behind him his companions and brethren? Various, and all gloriously, does He act indeed. He leaves His peace with them—He washes their feet, so that they might appear before God “clean every whit”—He promises them the Spirit to be their Light and Comfort—and He commits them to the Father, that the Father might continue to do for them, in His absence, what He Himself had been doing for them while He was with them. What outbreakings of Divine glory! And He undertakes to give them His care and thought and service, till He have perfected their condition, and that for ever, in the house of the Father!

If Paul, as a man, could do nothing *more* than he did, Jesus is here doing what none *less* than Jehovah's Fellow could have done.

7. And once more, in tracing this wondrous subject.

Paul *submits his conduct to the judgment of his Brethren*. “I have coveted no man's silver or gold or

apparel—yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me.” He stands before them in the testimony of a good conscience. I do not blame him or seek to depreciate him for this—though on another occasion he could say, it was a very small thing with him to be judged of man’s judgment, (1 Cor. iv. 3;) and would own that he was a fool in glorying. (2 Cor. xi., xii.) But again I say, I do not blame or depreciate him for this. But I ask is this the Lord Jesus? Does He submit His conduct to the judgment of man? Nay, He rather asserts three grand and glorious moral facts connected with Himself, and His way and life and behaviour in the world. He tells His Apostles that He had glorified God on the earth; He tells the Father that He had glorified Him in His ministry to the elect; and He says of Himself, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.”

What conscious moral elevation expresses itself here! It is moral glory of a quality necessarily, essentially Divine. This was a life and conduct that God manifest in flesh alone could exhibit. We dare not seek the like of it anywhere but in Jesus. It is our joy to know that it could not be found elsewhere in heaven or on earth, among angels or men; that none but the Son of the bosom, who was also the Son of Man, could have rendered such a living sacrifice of pure incense and sweet savour, more to the blessed God than the obedience of a whole creation would have been.

Thus have we looked at the glory that excelleth. Sweet moral beauty there was in Paul indeed. We may be humbled in ourselves as we look at or think of

such a man. But our own souls tell themselves, and the histories tell us in like manner, that it is all of another kind and quality, differing in material and in temperament altogether, from that which shows itself to us in the Lord Jesus. In Him it was Divinely moral beauty. It was the gold wire worked in the ephod. (Ex. xxxix. 3.)

And let me just further ask, is there not the expression of humanity in the scene, as it closes, which we could not get in the kindred scene between the Lord and His Apostles? "Paul kneeled down and prayed with them all; and they all wept sore, and fell on his neck and kissed him." Precious to the heart this is. We long to have more of it, and to see more of it. We are straitened and cold. The heart has but little capacity to let itself out after this manner. But could this have been the way between Jesus and His Apostles? What say our renewed instincts, our apprehensions and sensibilities in the new creature? And what says the history? Jesus prayed, as Paul did—but it was as turning His eyes to heaven, and addressing His Father, on the ground and title of His accomplished obedience; and then uttering His will and desire touching His saints. The disciples were sorrowful, as Paul's companions were, very sorrowful. Sorrow had filled their hearts, because they were about to lose Him, as they judged. But they well knew that He was more and other to them than Paul was to his brethren. They would hardly, in human, affectionate, warm-hearted intimacy, fall on the neck of One who had so lately, in Divine grace, washed their feet, giving them title

to appear before God their Father without a spot upon them. .

Surely these distinctions are full of meaning, and perfect in beauty. And again I say, for it is a happy thought to me, our instincts as saints would have suggested these very contrasts which we here find in these two sacred histories.

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH.

ROMANS I. 5.

DEEPLY and justly prizing our Authorized Version, yet alterations are at times well suggested—as on this verse, which should rather be, “By whom we have received grace and apostleship to the obedience of faith among all nations.”

We might religiously judge that nothing could be more acceptable to God, than the services of *love*. We should be quite ready to admit, that mere conformity with *law*, or the observance of commands, would not do for Him; but we should feel at the same time, that the services and renderings of love must be enough.

In this, however, we should greatly err. The service of love is not the thing. It is “the obedience of *faith*,” (as Romans i. 5 speaks,) that is looked for from us sinners.

We must remember this to His glory, and our comfort.

We have a passing intimation of this in Luke vii. The sinner of the city that is introduced there, was a fervent lover of the Lord. Nothing in her esteem was too good for Him—she gave Him herself, and the treasures of her house. He valued and enjoyed her love. Surely He did. But He recognized her faith at the

end, when He came to dismiss her; "Thy faith hath saved thee," He says to her; "go in peace."

So, in John xi. The Lord is there in the midst of the dearest affections. The scene is laid at Bethany, the spot dearest to Him of any on the face of the earth, the place which had then superseded Jerusalem in His affections, for He was dealing *personally*, and not *dispensationally* with the materials around Him. But even then and there, He trains them that loved Him, to faith in Him. He would have them apprehend His glory, *His glory for them*, and could not rest in *their love for Him*.

And this same mind is still more vividly and largely expressed in the scenes which we witness after His resurrection.

Love took the women to the sepulchre in Luke xxiv., but the Angel rebukes them for want of faith. The disciples going to Emmaus were sad. They had lost, as they judged, their hope and One whom they loved. But the Lord now, as His Angel before, rebukes this want of faith. And so, the company in Jerusalem, in the same chapter. The Lord conducts them, loving Him as indeed they did, into the *faith* of the *fact* and of the *meaning* of His resurrection.

So, in John xxi. Magdalene is alone at the sepulchre in deep, personal, fervent affection. But the Lord is not satisfied. He values it, I am right sure; but she must know Him better, apprehending Him by faith, as well as give Him these earnest services of love. He therefore reveals Himself to her as risen, and as risen for the sake of His brethren. That is, she must know Him in His grace and service, and not herself and her

love. She must have faith of His perfect love for His own, and not merely be bringing the fruit of her love to Him. So, in the same chapter, the disciples in the city were glad when they saw Him—glad, because they loved Him. But He sets Himself at once to instruct them in His resurrection and the results of it, the results of it to themselves and other sinners. He tells them of “life” and “peace”—and then, to the end of the chapter, He challenges faith.

This is so, I am full sure. But I would not, I cannot, but add, that all these instances are abundant to show us, that these affections and services were dear to Him. Ignorant love the heart of Jesus could prize. And He shows it, by those instances of it which I have been looking at. “Signs or tokens will be given to the doubt of *love*, though denied to the doubt of indifference”—as one has said. True indeed. This loving woman and others shall get signs to dispel their unbelief, as well as rebukes for their unbelief; and this shall tell us, that He prized their love, though He could not rest satisfied with it.

How truly acceptable to our hearts, all this is! We delight to think of the Lord thus prizing the feeble, ignorant movements of the heart towards Him, and letting us know how He answers them, thus, in His grace and gentleness. But surely we may take equal delight in the thought, that while He values our love for Him, He must have us acquaint ourselves with His love for *us*. He must have *faith*—that principle which trusts Him as a Giver, that principle which makes Him an object in the place and activity of grace, which acknowledges Him in the love that serves us, and not

on the throne that exacts of us; which understands this happy Divine secret, that God has found it, as for Himself, "more blessed to give than to receive."

And it is the purpose of the Epistle to the Romans, at least in its doctrinal part, to set forth the excellencies and wonders of *faith*. It is of faith it speaks to us, the faith of a sinner, what it apprehends as its object; and then, what it reaches and enjoys as its inheritance.

The eleventh of Hebrews celebrates faith as the principle by which *a saint* carries on his services and his victories amid the circumstances of life in the world. It is faith which is there set forth in its excellencies; but it is faith in the saints, in the elders, as the saints of earlier days are there called. But in the Epistle to the Romans it is faith in *the sinner*, that is set forth, not celebrated in its services and victories, or as that secret principle of the soul, by which the saints obtained a good report, but the secret in the soul of a sinner which apprehends wondrous objects, and reaches wondrous blessedness. The faith of *saints* will be rewarded: the faith of *sinners* will *sing* for ever. It is there declared to look at the Christ of God delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. What wondrous objects are there presented to its eye, and its acceptance! Nothing less than the most stupendous facts which could ever have been transacted in the wide, wide compass of creation itself; that God should deliver up His own Son to die for sinners, and then raise Him up from the dead, for the justification of all who would receive Him!

Blood upon the Mercy-Seat, or propitiation, is set forth to the view of faith—the grand and blessed mys-

tery, that God is now just while justifying the ungodly.

What objects can fill the eye so great and excellent and marvellous as these! And these are the objects presented to the eye of the faith of sinners. (Rom. iii., iv.)

And if the *objects* of faith are thus excellent and wondrous in the highest order of excellences and wonders, so are its *attainments* or the things that it reaches and possesses itself of, according also to the teaching of this Epistle.

“The righteousness of God” is its property. The believing sinner possesses himself of that at once. That righteousness at once constitutes, as I may say, his person. It makes him what he is. It clothes him. It sets him in his due form and personality before God. And who, of His creatures, can be more excellent, than the one who shines before Him as His own righteousness? We are made “the righteousness of God.”

And as this is the believing sinner’s present possession, as this forms his person, or is himself now and as he will be for ever, so “the glory of God” is his inheritance, in hope of which he now walks day by day. And if the *person* be excellent, what say we to this *condition*? If nothing higher could form me for the eye of God than His own righteousness, what could make me higher in my estate and circumstances around Him, than His own glory? (Rom. iii., v.)

Have we not, therefore, reached and attained the most marvellous conditions, as well as apprehended the most marvellous objects? Indeed it is so. We look at the Son of God in death and resurrection for us, as deli-

vered up and raised up for our blessing. These are our objects. And then, we shine personally in the righteousness of God, and claim as our estate and inheritance the glory of God. These are our attainments or possessions.

What could have been done more than has been done? If the obedience of faith be *demanded*, it is *encouraged* beyond all that the heart of man could have conceived.

But I must add this—that He who claims our confidence as sinners, has entitled Himself to it. And a most blessed secret of Scripture this is. It demands our faith in Christ, and in the redemption which He has wrought for us; and it reads to us His divine title to this which He challenges.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is, as I may say, the closing, crowning testimony to that. Shall I say, it seals, and seals as for ever, seals as with a seal that can never be questioned or effaced, the blessed One's title to the faith which He claims.

In one aspect of it, that Epistle may be called, "God's acceptance of Christ." It sets forth that fact, establishing it in the mouth of the most august witnesses.

Other testimonies had been previously given to the same blessed mystery. I know that. The rent vail at the moment of the death, testified God's acceptance of Christ. Then, the resurrection, as a more public witness, gave evidence of the same. And then, the gift and presence of the Holy Ghost here, fruit of the ascension and glory of Jesus, comes in its way and season, to tell the same great truth. So that in the

mouth of these three august witnesses, the rent veil, the resurrection, and the presence of the Holy Ghost down here, the fact is established, that Christ has been accepted, and accepted for us.

But then, after all these, comes this Epistle to do the same service for us, in another and a further way. In that writing, the Spirit opens the heavens; and the heavens thus opened becomes the crowning testimony to the same great fact. Because it shows us heaven as the seat of the ascended Jesus, ascended and seated there in such characters as suit and answer our necessities. It shows us Jesus there as "the Purger of our sins;" as "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession;" as "the Mediator of the new covenant;" "the Author and Finisher of faith"—and each and all of these characters tell us of God's acceptance of Christ for us.

F A I T H .

WE speak so much of "faith" in connection with Christian truth, that it is well to inquire a little carefully, what Scripture tells us of it, that we may be somewhat better acquainted with that about which we speak so often and so familiarly.

The early part of the Epistle to the Romans is the leading Scripture on this great subject—or at least, on the subject of "faith" *as first awakened in the sinner*. The life of faith in a saint, as is well known among us, is illustrated in Hebrews xi.

At the very opening of this Epistle, we learn, that it is "the obedience" of faith which is now sought by God in the Gospel. And when we think of it for a little, we shall be able to see, that the obedience which faith renders is the highest, and must be the most acceptable, form which obedience can take. (See ch. i. 5.)

If we rendered obedience to God as a Lawgiver, we should honour His authority—but when we render obedience to Him revealing Himself in the grace and salvation of the Gospel, we honour *Himself*.

Thus, though it is grace that is dealing with us, the response which it gets yields the Blessed One richer glory than He could have received on any other principle. He is honoured as a *Saviour* by our faith; He

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would have been as a *Lawgiver* by our conformity with every jot and tittle in the Statutes.

“To the obedience of faith among all nations,” (Rom. i. 5,)—and then it is added, “for His name”—intimating how His glory is concerned in this—as I have said—the brightest, dearest, most welcome honour His name could receive, it receives from the faith of a sinner.

Then further as to faith, we learn what it possesses itself of. And here we learn, that if God by faith get from us His brightest glory, we by faith get the highest dignity a creature is capable of—that is—“the righteousness of God.” No dignity can a creature stand in more marvellous than this. And yet, thus it is with those who have the faith of the Gospel.

And in connection with this, we learn still further what that object is which faith apprehends and lays hold on, thus to obtain Divine righteousness. It is “Jesus,” and “His blood”—as we read in chap. iii. 22, “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” (See also verses 25, 26.)

Under the eye of faith, God has set forth “a propitiation,” a Mercy-Seat. Faith in the blood of Christ apprehends that. It sees God just and yet a Justifier. It is to stand within the holiest, and see the Mercy-Seat there. That mystic throne seated itself on the Law. The Law or the Testimony was in the Ark, and the Throne where the Glory dwelt rested on the Ark. Thus, the Law sustained it. And surely so. It would not be God’s throne if judgment and righteousness were not maintained there. But blood is there as well as

the Law. The blood that has rent the vail, satisfied all that the throne could have demanded of a sinner, is there also. The death of the Lord Jesus has accomplished reconciliation, in the way of maintaining righteousness while answering for sin—and thus, the faith that looks upward sees “a mercy-seat,” and thus possesses itself of Divine righteousness.

Faith thus lays hold on its object, and possesses itself of this personal dignity.

What are its properties, its virtues, the ends and results it works, is then told us.

“It excludes boasting.”

It addresses itself alike to all, to the Gentile world at large, as to the Jew. God in grace, God apprehended by faith, obeyed by faith, is the God of the one as of the other.

It establishes law—because it receives nothing but on the ground of what Christ has done to magnify the law and make it honourable.

It deals with grace.

It sets the blessed God in action, and keeps the creature as a receiver.

It gives all the glory to God.

These are the fine properties and results of faith, as shown us in chapters iii., iv.

And after this, this Epistle goes on to detail to us the various features of that blessed condition in which we stand by faith.

And here I might notice, that faith is shown us to be an *individual, personal* thing. “It is the power of God unto salvation,” says the Apostle of the Gospel, “to *every one* that believeth”—“the just [singular

number] shall live by faith." (i., 16, 17.) And *each*, in his own individual personality, stands by faith thus blessedly circumstanced.

1. It gives full, present peace with God, though we are sinners.

2. It gives access to a state of grace or favour.

3. It sets us in the sure and certain hope of glory.

4. It renders a reason why we should glory in tribulation.

5. It introduces us to perfect love in God.

6. It gives us an interest in Christ's present life, as in His accomplished death.

7. It reveals God Himself as a spring of joy to us.

No wonder indeed that Scripture makes so much of faith, since such as these are its ways of working, its virtues, its properties, the ends it reaches, and the things it secures. *Such a religion must be Divine.* It is the secret, and the principle of immediate, personal confidence in Christ, refusing the props of human or carnal religiousness.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

IN the dispensation of His grace, God provides the sinner with an answer to His own demands upon him. He gives him security in the day of the judgment of righteousness. For He judges sin. Surely He cannot pass it by. Righteousness calls for the judgment of it. But He, in grace, provides the sinner with an answer and a shelter: and it becomes the duty and the obedience of a sinner, to use this shelter—and this using of God's provision, is faith.

The Lord, in this way, provided Noah with an answer to His own righteous and purposed judgment that was coming on the world before the Flood. "Make thee an ark of gopher-wood," said God to him. Noah did so, believing the word both of judgment and of deliverance, and he was safe.

He provided Israel in Egypt, against another day of judgment. Israel used this provision, putting the blood upon the lintel, and was sheltered from the sword of the Angel.

In like manner, He made provision for Rahab in the day of the judgment of Canaan, as He had made provision for Israel in the day of the judgment of Egypt; and she escaped, just because she received the word by faith, and used God's provisions, hanging the scarlet line out from the window.

And thus is it still.

There are two things now under judgment, as once the antediluvian world was under judgment, and then Egypt, and then Canaan. Man, and the world, are both of them marked for judgment. But God has provided a refuge for man the sinner. The Gospel is that which reveals it. The sacrifice of His own Lamb is an answer to all His demands in righteousness against the sinner, and God Himself has given that Lamb, and accepted that sacrifice. Faith accepts this gift. By faith the sinner pleads that answer, and is saved.

What a simple, wondrous method! what riches of grace! Nothing, as we thus see, enters into God's way in grace, but faith. It is, therefore, the obedience of faith, which is now demanded. (Rom. i. 5.) And when the Lord was asked by some, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" He answered, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent." (John vi.)

The excellency of this principle of faith, its wondrous working, and its high esteem with God, might be shown by the testimony of Scripture from beginning to end. All gives way before it. Even a state of *innocency* at the beginning had to yield up the place to a state of faith. (Gen. iii.) *Judgment* is met and averted by it, as we have seen. *Law* is set aside to let it in. And *love* itself will not be accepted of God instead of it. Faith is established as the link between God and us.

But this being so, this being fixed and settled, it is blessed to be taught, as we are in Romans i.—v., the moral glories which are to be discovered in this precious doctrine of faith. Thankfully indeed ought we to ponder such Divine instruction.

This doctrine, we there see and know, *exposes and humbles* man thoroughly. It assumes that we are dead in sins, left incurably, irrecoverably ruined by ourselves, and under the law. But then, it also *assures* us and *dignifies* us. It gives the believing sinner the clear, sure title to return to God; and when returned, it tells him of the dignities and joys, the honours and the privileges, which await him in that wealthy, blessed place.

And beside. It is perfect in what it *denies* us, as well as in what it *confers* on us. It excludes "boasting" from us, while it makes us "the righteousness of God," and "children," and gives us peace and grace and joy, eternal interest in the past death of Christ, and in His present life, and in His coming glory, of which it now gives the sure hope, with possession of the love of God in its measureless fulness.

These things are what this doctrine of faith does for *us*—as we learn from these wondrous chapters, Romans i.—v. And what can be more blessed than this principle of faith, and justification by it, when it secures to the sinner such conditions and results as these?

Then as to God.—It is that which *displays* Him, and thus *glorifies* Him beyond every thing. That marvellous mystery, which is called the Gospel, God's good news, presents God to His whole creation in the highest forms of moral glory. It shows Him in the fulness of combined grace and righteousness, as just and yet a Justifier. It puts Him as the doer of all the work, and the inheritor of all the glory. It also puts Him alike before all men, Jews and Gentiles. "Is He the God of the Jews only?" it asks; and it answers, "Nay, but of the Gentiles also."

These are blessed consequences of this doctrine or principle of faith, as it respects God.

And further, as these chapters also let us learn—*It establishes law*. This is another fine fruit and consequence of the doctrine of faith. For the Gospel (and it is with the Gospel faith has to do) exhibits the Law as magnified and made honourable, the full penalty of the breach of it having been sustained by Him whom the Gospel preaches to us.

Surely we may then say, Well may that great, Divine Epistle open by saying, that it is the obedience of *faith* which is now demanded of all men by God, for the glory of His own name.

In the Epistle of the same Apostle to the Galatians, he lets us perceive, as in his own person, that “justification by faith,” which he is there defending, is no mere dogma, or proposition which may exercise the intellect, or give a theme to the mind to discuss, as in the schools. He lets us know, that he himself had proved it to be a truth full of life and power.

And there is this difference, among others, between these two Epistles. In the Romans we get this doctrine propounded in its moral glory, insisted on, taught and proved, with its bearings on the glory of God, and on the condition of the believing sinner—as we have seen. In the Galatians, the Apostle shows *himself* to us in connection with this doctrine. He *lives* it, rather than teaches or proves it—though he does that also. He is defending it against gainsayers, and not simply propounding it to sinners—and in fervency of spirit, he is led forth of God, to tell us how this doctrine, this principle of faith, illustrated its virtue in his own

person, and that too, in varied relationships, as towards the creatures around him, as towards gainsayers, as in God's own presence, and as in connection with this present evil world.

As towards *the creature*, that blessed, personal, immediate possession of God, which this doctrine or principle of faith had given him, made him independent. He could go down to Arabia. He could turn his back on Jerusalem and all that was there to countenance and refresh him, and look to the solitudes of the desert. (chap. i.)

As towards *gainsayers*, it made him as bold as a lion, not intimidated even by the presence of a Peter, who, at that moment, more than any other man, had all title in the flesh. (chap. ii.)

As *in God's presence*, it made him free and happy, breathing there the spirit of adoption, and knowing the liberty of one accepted as in the Beloved. (chap. iv.)

As *in connection with this present evil world*, it gave him victory over it. He was crucified to it, and it to him. (chap. vi.)

These are some of the reflections of the doctrine of Divine righteousness, or justification by faith, in the soul of this dear Apostle. It was no mere intellectual possession of a dogma that could do these things for the soul. This doctrine implies restoration to God, personal, immediate restoration. Adam, through sin, lost Him; the sinner, through faith, recovers Him. It is the spring of hope and of love—as he tells us in this same Epistle. (v., 5, 6.) It is no mere scholastic proposition. Justification by faith is the religion of a sinner in personal, immediate confidence in God.

In this same Epistle, the Apostle under the Holy Ghost, protects this truth against all trespassers, be they as august and full of authority as you please; whether, as I may say, chief in *creation*, like Angels, chief in *office*, like Apostles, or chief in *the ways of God*, as the Law. (i. 8; ii. 11-21; iv. 19-31.) Angels must stand accursed, if they would gainsay this truth. Peter shall be withstood to the face without sparing him, if he cloud it. The Law, which was God's own voice in its time and place, must be silent when this truth proclaims itself.

This truth, the Gospel of God, brings a message to me about *myself*, I would here add, as well as about God. It tells me of *sin* as well as of *salvation*. It tells me that the whole world is in a state of revolt and rebellion, and that I myself am a self-ruined sinner. If I receive such a message as that, conviction, and affections which accompany conviction, will be awakened in me. As naturally will the soul be occupied with them, as with the peace and assurance and joy which the message of salvation will inspire. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," was said to a *startled* sinner. The Samaritan was convicted by the Lord as a sinner, ere He revealed Himself to her as a Saviour. The Gospel speaks of judgment and of peace—but it lays judgment at the door of *all*, peace on the conscience of those who are *awakened*.

Justification by faith is never treated as a mere scholastic proposition. Indeed it is not. It is the religion of a convicted sinner's personal, immediate confidence in God, and that, too, enjoyed on a title which God Himself has, as it were, written out for him. We

may see the wealth of that place, to which (according to this same Epistle to the Galatians) it brings the sinner. It brings him into the family of God, making him a child. It brings him into the hope or prospect of glory as his inheritance. And there, in these wealthy places, it teaches him to breathe the air of freedom and of love. (Gal. iii. 26 ; v., 1, 5, 6.)

The moral grandeur of this dogma (for we may call it so) is in every way wonderful. Justification by faith is infinitely distant from merely leaving us as delivered from judgment, or escaped from the curse. Nor is it the being brought back to God in doubt and fear. It is a *full* return to Him, a return *the whole way*, restoration to more than the goodly estate which Adam by transgression lost, a state of ease and unsuspecting assurance. It would not be redemption, if it did not give us the state in all its rich qualities, which we lost by sin. It gives us more than that, I know. But it must give us that, at the least, to be what it is, redemption. This has been observed by others long since; and it must be so.

Faith puts the soul near and with God. It makes God Himself the great circumstance in our condition. To give up the religion of faith is to remove from God. Intermediate things disappear, all that intervened has been dismissed, when faith enters. The same Epistle teaches these things. (Gal. i. 6 ; iii. 25 ; iv. 9.)

And further. In treating this great dogma, the Apostle shows us, how it secures the claims of holiness.

He teaches, that redemption from the Law is only by the death of Christ ; and that we have no title to deliver

ourselves from that old husband, except by union with Him that is raised from the dead, the new husband; and by this union, fruit is brought forth to God. This is the religion of faith, and it is, in this manner, the source and the security of holiness. (Rom. vii.)

So again, in the Galatians. The same Apostle teaches, that the hearing of faith was the receiving of the Spirit; and a walking in the Spirit is a not fulfilling of the lusts of the flesh. (iii. 1-5; v. 16-18.)

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 22—28.

ERAS OF RESURRECTION.

As to the whole of this chapter, I may say there is an order in the parts of it, which it is edifying to discover and meditate. It might be entitled, "The story of grace and of glory in the light of the resurrection." The order of which I speak is this.

1—4. The fact of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is *stated*.

5—11. This fact is *proved* by many and different witnesses, by those who saw Him on earth after He rose, and by one who saw Him in glory after He ascended.

12—19. The *value* of the fact thus stated and proved, is here (in beautiful order) set forth. All is declared to depend on it—the interests of those who are dead, and of those who are still alive and labouring; indeed of all sinners, *i. e.*, of all mankind.

Here ends the story of *grace* in the light of the resurrection, because we have been taken out of our sins.

20—28. Here the story of *glory* begins in the light of the same mystery. The risen Lord is looked at as a *first-fruits*, the pledge of a harvest, which harvest is to be gathered "at His coming," and then, with Him to be carried through the kingdom and into the age when

“God shall be all in all.” This may be read in connection with 1 Thes. iv., and Rev. xx., xxi.

29—38. Incidentally, the Apostle takes up certain thoughts here. He owns that if there were no resurrection, he, himself indeed, would be a fool, suffering for nothing. But he says that those are rather the fools who question resurrection, for they have neither the knowledge of God Himself, or of the lesson which sowing-time and harvest teaches us.

39—49. In these verses he resumes the story of glory in the light of resurrection. He had already shown us, in ver. 20—28, the *journey* through which the risen saints were to be carried, as from glory to glory; now he shows us the *persons or bodies* in which they are to take that journey.

50. In this verse he teaches that such a person *alone* could take such a journey.

51—57. Here he teaches us the wondrous process by which this new *person or body is to be taken up or assumed* by the saints. And he further lets us know, that this will be the sharing of the victory which the Lord Jesus has already gained.

58. Here, in this last verse, he briefly draws the moral or practical lesson of this great mystery.

This seems to be the natural structure and general contents of this wondrous, magnificent chapter. I am about to look, however, more particularly at verses 20—28.

As I have already said, in the great treatise on this mystery which we get in the whole of this chapter, the Apostle (having already asserted it, then proved it as in the mouth of witnesses, and then shown the need and

indispensableness of it) in these few verses proceeds to teach us the different eras of resurrection and things that are to take place both during them and after them. It is a scripture very rich and very beautiful in its communications.

In the first place we learn from it, that the Lord Jesus was *all alone* in the day of His resurrection. He occupied that moment Himself, and of the people, as I may say, there was none with Him—not one. “Christ the first-fruits,” as we read here. Because His resurrection had qualities which were peculiar; altogether so. It was a resurrection *from* the dead, a victorious resurrection, life in victory over the power of death, *a victory wrought out and won by Himself*. But it was the only resurrection which had this quality or character in it. Resurrection was *due* to Christ. He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. (Rom. vi. 4.) It was not possible that such an one could have been holden of death and the grave. (Acts ii. 24.) He Himself likewise could say and did say, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” (John ii. 19.) And He was speaking of the Temple of His body.

All this was peculiar, as I need not say, and could not be said of any other. Resurrection was *due* to Him; and besides, He had the power of it in *Himself*, or by virtue of what He was. Therefore, we see Him alone in the first-fruit era of resurrection, “Christ the first-fruits.” And this had been typified under the law, by the reaping of a sheaf at the beginning of the harvest, (and before any of the new corn had been eaten,)

and by the waving of it, just as it was, before the Lord. (Lev. xxiii. 9-14.)

But then, Christ in resurrection, being called "the first-fruits," pledges a harvest. This is the significancy of such a title. Accordingly, in due season the harvest follows—and this constitutes the second era in the series of resurrections. As we go on in this scripture to read, "Afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." And this is *anything but solitary*. Countless thousands shall be there, all the elect from the beginning to that moment, for all of them are "children of the resurrection." (Luke xx. 36.) But like the previous resurrection of the first-fruits, it will be a resurrection *from* the dead, a victorious resurrection—this quality, however, separating it from the other, that it is a victory over death not *gained by* this multitude, but *conferred upon* them; not *due to them*, but *in infinite grace bestowed upon them*, and bestowed upon them by Him who has already been "the first-fruits," or, as He is elsewhere called, "the first-born from the dead." They rise from the dead, or in victory, simply because "they are Christ's," as we read here. He had risen in His day just because He was *who* He was and *what* He was—they now rise just as simply and as merely because they are *whose* they are. "They that are Christ's at His coming." This is the harvest of Leviticus xxiii., following the first-fruits—the ingathering. Or, it is at least *as* that ingathering. We are said to be "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures." (James i. 18.) And, blessed to tell it out again, we rise, like the Lord Himself, *from* the dead, or in victorious resurrection. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead

dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. viii. 11.)

This being accomplished in its season, as we read, "at His coming," and as we see further shown to us in 1 Thes. iv., then, again in its season, we reach the third resurrection-era, called "the end." (ver. 24.) But here, we have new thoughts suggested to us.

This is a resurrection not worthy of the name—consequently it is only implied and not expressed here. It is not a victorious resurrection, or a resurrection *from* the dead, like the preceding one, but simply and ingloriously a resurrection *of* the dead, a coming up of the unregenerate, of those whose names are not written in the book of life, to receive the fruit of their works from the judgment of Him who sits on the great white throne. It is, as I may express it, a *judicial*, not a *victorious* resurrection, a resurrection not to life but to judgment, as is anticipated by the Lord in John v. 29, and as is exhibited by the Prophet in Revelation xx., 11-15.

This is something new, and of a solemn character indeed. "I will sing," the harp of prophecy says, "of mercy and of judgment." The sunny seasons of resurrection at which we first looked, resurrection to life and in glory, are now succeeded by one season of resurrection which summons the dead to judgment and the lake of fire. And we need different seasons in our souls as we read these different things. We ought to know the joy of anticipating the resurrection from the dead; and we ought to feel what awful forewarnings and foreshadowings Scripture gives us of the doom of those who

do not, in this age of "long-suffering," this "acceptable year," this "day of salvation," touch Christ in the crowd and get virtue out of Him. But we are cold and narrow-hearted. Indeed we are. But so it is, again I say; the voices of the Prophets tell of mercy and of judgment—of resurrection *from* the dead, as to glory, and of resurrection *of* the dead, as to judgment. "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of *life*; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of *damnation*." (John v. 28, 29.)

We have, however, much connected with this third resurrection season, in these few verses in 1 Cor. xv. For the Spirit is pleased, in this wondrous chapter, to write out for us a large piece of the *history* of resurrection, as well as to assert and prove the *fact* of it. He has already, as we have seen, taught us about resurrection, as to the eras or seasons in which it is to occur—now He goes on, by the Apostle, further to teach us what is to accompany the third and last of these eras.

We learn several things, weighty in themselves, serious and interesting, and fitted, like all prophetic truth, to regulate and enlarge our thoughts on the great subject of God's dealings with this ruined world of ours, and His purposes touching the various displays of His own glories.

We learn, that the Lord Jesus having received a Kingdom after the second resurrection era, will for a time (here left undefined) hold it, and order it in a way to reduce every enemy in subjection to Himself, even death.

Having done this, and thus fulfilled the office and business of "the Kingdom," under commission from God, having been faithful to this great stewardship, as He was before to every other stewardship, He will deliver it up, "deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father," that "God may be all in all." That is, that God Himself may then be displayed in some, doubtless, ineffable form of glory worthy of Himself and worthy of His eternity, when all stewardships in the hand of Christ have been fulfilled, when grace in the age of long-suffering, and power in the age of the Kingdom, have fulfilled their commission.

Synchronously with this delivering up of the Kingdom, and this great closing action, the third resurrection-season will take place. It will be, as we have seen, a resurrection of the dead, and to *judgment*. The judgment shall take place before "the great white throne," and the doom of the dead then judged is to be "the lake of fire." And this action will be in full consistency with all that which accompanies it—because, it will be another witness, that the Lord Jesus is there subduing all things to Himself. It will be an action of "the Kingdom"—just as the casting of death itself into the lake of fire will be another action. All tells of the full subjection of that moment to Christ in every thing—that He has been able to subdue all things to Himself, as we read in Philippians iii.—and that then, it is high time, fit time, glorious time, to lay power and stewardship aside, and enter on God's own eternity—when "a sceptre of righteousness" may yield to "a dwelling" of "righteousness." (Heb. i. 8; 2 Pet. iii. 13.)

But I must notice two or three things connected with this more particularly. Christ, we read here, "delivers up" the Kingdom. This will be the very first time, in the long course of the world's history, in the lengthened succession of thrones and dynasties, that "power" has been given back to the hand that had committed it. One of the Beasts of Daniel after another had his kingdom taken from him. He had been untrue to that which was entrusted to him, and the stewardship was taken away from him. This is the common history. There has never been an "enduring" kingdom, for there has never been a "faithful" kingdom. There has as yet been no "righteous" sceptre, and therefore as yet no "unbroken" sceptre. The nations of the earth are judged, as well as the four great Beasts or Empires—"the little hills" as well as the "great mountains." This we see in Isaiah xv-xxiv., and in Jeremiah xxv., where the cup of God's indignation is sent from one people to another, till every land, every nation, is made to drink of it. And I need not add, that the nation of Israel, and the throne of the house of David, were just as untrue as any, and more guiltily untrue than any.

Messiah stands not only "pre-eminent," but "alone" in His Kingdom. He will be "the true and faithful" King, as He has already been "the true and faithful" Witness and Prophet. (Rev. xix. 11.) He will order His Kingdom in judgment and justice. He will hold His sceptre in righteousness, and keep His Kingdom-house as it ought to be kept. (Ps. ci.) And therefore, there is no taking of it from Him to give it to another more faithful than He. He can give an account of His

stewardship, though He prove to be the only One that has ever been able to answer when so challenged. (Luke xvi. 1; Ps. lxxxii.) There will be no taking of the Kingdom from Him, but He will "deliver it up," as One that has been infinitely faithful, faithful to the utmost jot and tittle, to Him that appointed Him.

This is all simple, but all precious—and this is all conveyed to our thought, in full assurance, by the words "When He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father"—or, as the words might be, "When He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father."

This is one of the blessed secrets concerning the Lord Jesus which we learn in this magnificent though short prophetic word. There is a passing touch or stroke of beauty, which I must also notice, in the midst of the great and weighty communications of this scripture. It is this—that "death" is the only enemy which is specified or signalised here, as being destroyed, or put under the feet of Christ. In a general way we learn, that "all enemies" are to be subdued; but "death," and death only, is named individually or specifically here.

There is a stroke of beauty in this. This is keeping the great subject of the whole chapter still in view—for it is a writing on resurrection. Other Prophets will tell us of the subjection of other things to the sceptre of the Lord Jesus in the day of His royalty. Daniel tells us, that He is to break in pieces every other Kingdom, and fill the whole earth with His own. Isaiah tells us, that the earth, in that day, shall be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. The

Psalmist again and again tells us of all creation owning Him in His universal lordship. John can call Him "King of kings, and Lord of lords;" and can hear the whole world shouting, "Hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth." All this, and far more of like glory, is told by the Prophets of God touching the coming Sovereignty of the Son of Man. But there is no one feature in the wide range of this universal monarchy, and all-conquering, dominant power, signalled here, but the destruction of death in the mighty sweep and sway of the Kingdom of Christ. And again I say, there is a touch and a stroke of beauty in that, as resurrection was the theme of the whole chapter.

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ALL that has been for the Lord or from the Lord among His saints shall be owned in His day. All *grace* in them, all *love*, all *service*, all *suffering* for Him or for righteousness, all forms and measures of these things and kindred things, shall be accepted and honoured. But so, I add, all *learning of His mind* shall have its acceptance with Him and its own proper joy in that day. It may be but small in comparison, but it will have its measure. *Servants, lovers, imitators, martyrs*, shall be accepted then, but so shall *disciples*. I claim a place in that day when "every man shall have praise of God," for those who, in the midst of human mistakes and misjudgments, have learnt, and prized, and held to the thoughts and principles of the Divine Wisdom, of the mind of God in the progress of His dispensations.

